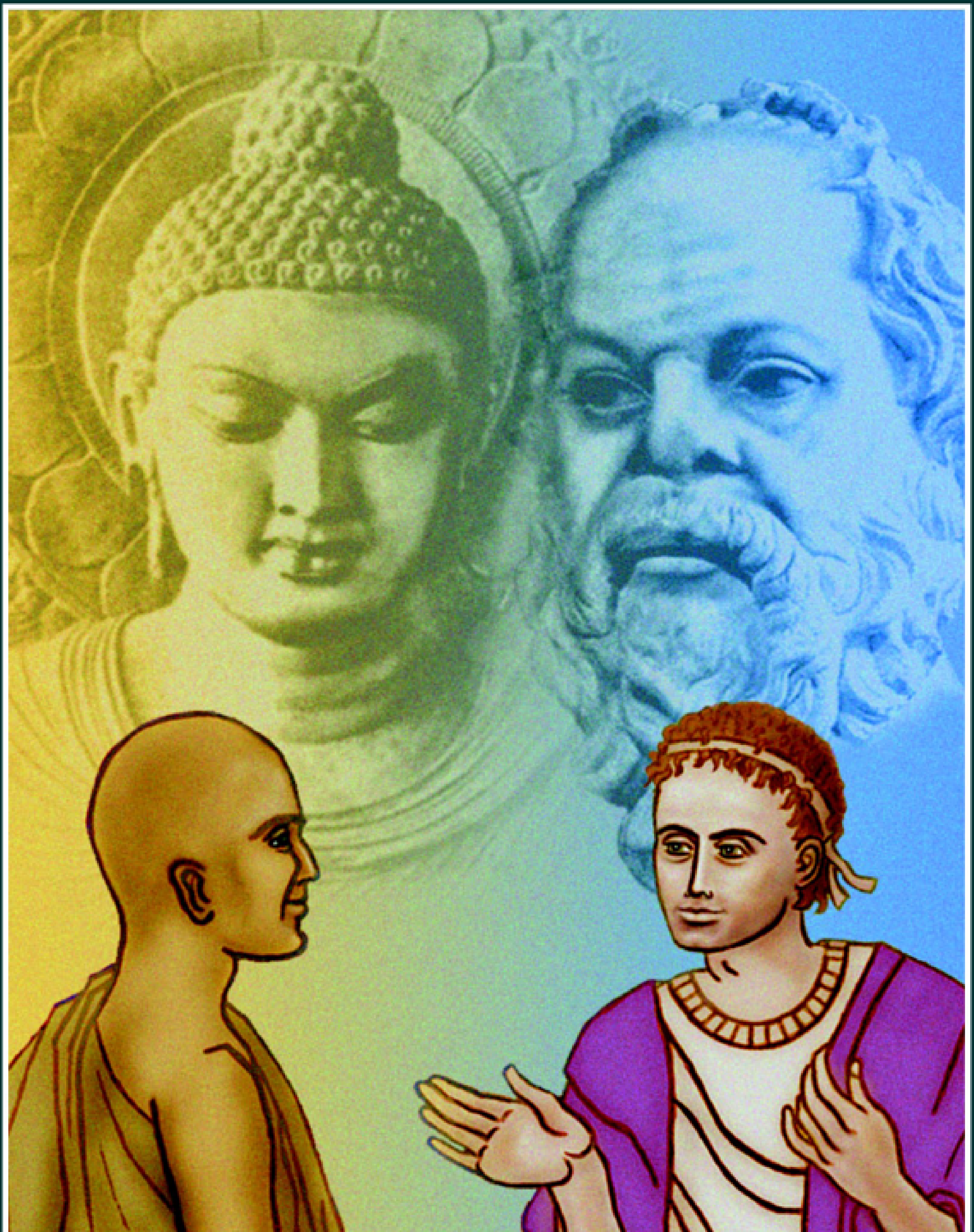
THE QUESTIONS OF KING MILINDA



An Abridgement of the Milindapañhā

Edited by N.K.G. Mendis

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ABOUT THE EDITOR

N.K.G. Mendis graduated from the Medical Faculty of the University of Sri Lanka in 1946 and did postgraduate training in India and the United Kingdom. Since 1972 he has been in general practice in Nova Scotia, Canada. A long-time student of Pali, he is widely read in the canonical literature of Theravada Buddhism and is an active supporter of the Buddhist Viharas in Washington and Toronto and the Bhavana Society in West Virginia. His previous BPS publications include *Inspiration from the Dhammapada* (Wheel No. 279) and *The Abhidhamma in Practice* (Wheel No. 322/323).

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AN ABRIDGEMENT OF THE MILINDAPAÑHĀ

Edited by N.K.G. Mendis

Introduction by Bhikkhu Bodhi

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The passage numbers from Horner's translation corresponding to the passages included in this edition are given, by chapter and section number, in parenthesis following the titles of the selections, both in the Table of Contents and in the body of the book. The titles of the selections in Parts II and III have been devised by the present editor; the titles of the Dilemmas in Part IV do not always follow those of Horner.

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Abbreviations

A	Aṅguttara Nikāya
BPS	Buddhist Publication Society
D	Dīgha Nikāya
Dhp	Dhammapada
Dhp-a	Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā
Dhs	Dhammasaṅgaṇī
It	Itivuttaka
J-a	Jātaka
Khp	Khuddakapāṭha
Khp-a.	Khuddakapāṭha Aṭṭhakathā
M	Majjhima Nikāya
Mil-a	Milindapañha Aṭṭhakathā
Paṭis	Paṭisambhidāmagga
PTS	Pali Text Society
S	Saṃyutta Nikāya
Sn	Suttanipāta
Ud	Udāna
Vibh	Vibhaṅga
Vin	Vinaya
Vism	*Visuddhimagga*

All references by volume and page number are to the PTS editions, unless noted otherwise. References to Vism. are to chapter and section of the translation by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification* (BPS 1975).

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Introduction

The *Milindapañhā*, the Questions of King Milinda, is one of the most popular and authoritative works of Pali Buddhist literature. T.W. Rhys Davids, the first translator of the text into English, ventures the opinion that "the *Questions of Milinda* is undoubtedly the masterpiece of Indian prose, and indeed is the best book of its class, from a literary point of view, that had then been produced in any country."[1] The great Buddhist commentator Ācariya Buddhaghosa cites the *Milindapañhā* as an authority in his *Visuddhimagga* and his commentaries to the Pali Canon,[2] while in Burma the book has actually been included in the Sutta Piṭaka itself, as part of the Khuddaka Nikāya or Miscellaneous Collection. Although the Buddhists of the other Theravāda countries have not gone quite so far in expressing their esteem, in all those lands where the Pali Tipiṭaka reigns supreme the *Milindapañhā* stands just behind it as a weighty textual source for resolving knotty problems of doctrine and as a gem of classical Pali literature.

Origins and Transmission

It is perhaps ironical that while the *Milindapañhā* has achieved a position of such eminence in the Theravāda Buddhist world, its origins may well go back, not to the old Theravāda school during its sojourn in Middle India, but to a non-Theravāda school which adhered to essentially the same doctrine and discipline (*dhamma-vinaya*) as that propounded in the Pali Canon. The geographical references within the work indicate that it was composed, either as a whole or in its nuclear chapters, in Northwest India, perhaps in Kashmir or the Punjab. The Sarvāstivāda school, an early rival of the old Theravāda, is known to have flourished in Gandhāra and Kashmir during the period to which the *Milinda* is usually assigned,[3] and it is therefore conceivable that the work had

1. Rhys Davids, *The Questions of King Milinda*, p. xlviii.
2. Horner, at *Milinda's Questions*, p. xx, provides a table of passages in Ācariya Buddhaghosa's works which either cite or allude to the *Milindapañhā*.
3. Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India*, p. 126.

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its roots in that school of early Buddhism. Nothing, however, can be established with certainty in this regard, and in any case the *Milinda* is in no way sectarian but for the most part articulates the common Buddhist programme that united the various early schools.

Though the date of its composition cannot be fixed with precision, the *Milindapañhā* was probably written around the beginning of the Christian era. If the identification of King Milinda with the Bactrian Greek king Menander is correct (and this seems to be indubitable—see below), then it must have been composed about a century after his death (ca. 150 B.C.). It must have also been in circulation for several centuries to acquire near-canonical status when Ācariya Buddhaghosa set about editing the Pali commentaries in Sri Lanka in the fifth century. An interesting question—much easier to pose than to answer—is whether Buddhaghosa quoted the *Milinda* on the basis of his own independent acquaintance with it or found such quotations already embedded in the ancient Sinhala commentaries he consulted at the Mahāvihāra in Anurādhapura.

Rhys Davids and other scholars maintain, by reason of its geographical setting, that the *Milinda* was originally written in Sanskrit or in some North Indian Prakrit.[4] However, no version in any other Indic language has survived, nor does it seem that the book is referred to in any other known work of Sanskrit Buddhism, whether of the Hinayana or Mahayana schools. This absence is strange, considering the *Milinda's* comprehensive range and accessible style. The identity of the author remains unknown. It even seems probable that the later chapters, from the Dilemmas onward, are accretions to an originally smaller work, and in this case we would have to regard the complete book as the product of several hands, all unknown. Support for this thesis can be marshalled from the fact that the work has been preserved in Chinese translation under the title "Sūtra of the Bhikshu Nāgasena."[5] This version corresponds to the first three parts of the present Pali version, though with substantial differences especially in Part I, the background narrative. This point strongly suggests that the chapters beginning with the Dilemmas are accretions appended to the original core, which contained only the first three parts; the first of these was later elaborated by the

4. Rhys Davids, p. xi.

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Theravadins, either after the book had been assimilated to their own tradition (on the assumption that it came from another school) or after their own school acquired its final form (on the assumption that the work is, after all, of Theravāda vintage). That the additional chapters may have been added even a century or more after the original nucleus was written seems to be borne out by stylistic considerations; the restrained epigrammatic style of the early chapters contrasts sharply with the sweeping eloquence of the later chapters.

Exactly how and when the *Milinda* came to Sri Lanka is not known, but in that land it has enjoyed high repute as a textual authority. It is perhaps the only non-canonical work, apart from the old commentaries, appealed to by Ācariya Buddhaghosa. Along with the Tipiṭaka, the Pali recension was transmitted to Burma and Thailand, and in those countries too it has been much esteemed. During the reign of King Kīrti Sri Rājasingha in Sri Lanka (1747–81) the work was translated into Sinhala, at the request of the king and under royal patronage, by a bhikkhu of the Malwatta lineage, Ven. Hinatikumbure Sumangala Thera. A century later, in 1877, this translation was published in Colombo as a volume of 650 pages, at the time one of the largest books issued by the Sinhala press.[6] In Burma too the *Milinda* has been honoured by translation in the form of *nissaya*, a word-for-word rendering into Burmese alongside the Pali text. It has also been made the subject of several commentaries. One of the most highly regarded of these is the *Milindapañhā Aṭṭhakathā*, a 500-page commentary in the Pali style of Buddhaghosa's Aṭṭhakathās, written early in the present century by the Ven. Mingun Jetavun Sayādaw, meditation master of the late Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw.

5. Ven. Pesala, in *The Debate of King Milinda*, p. xiv, lists some noteworthy differences between the Pali and Chinese versions. A comparative study of the two works has been written by the Vietnamese bhikkhu Thich Minh Chau, entitled *Milindapañhā and Nāgasenabhikshu Sūtra: A Comparative Study*, but this work was not available to either the compiler or editor of the present book.
6. Rhys Davids, p. xi.

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Cast and Setting

The *Milindapañhā* unfolds as a dialogue between the Bactrian Greek ruler King Milinda and the Buddhist sage, the Elder Nāgasena. Milinda first appears in the work as a royal philosopher who has been demolishing, with refutations, the tenets of the different schools of Indian religious thought that he encounters in his domain (which are pushed back, anachronistically, to the "six heretical teachers" contemporary with the Buddha). His inquiries are apparently driven, not by cynicism, but by a deep thirst for truth. Bhante Nāgasena, the Buddhist protagonist to whom Milinda's search for an intellectual peer eventually leads him, is a revered monk who combines a masterly knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures with a philosophically acute mind and the experiential realization of the final goal of the teaching, the attainment of arahatship. In the dialogues Milinda poses the questions and Nāgasena replies. The dialogues do not bear at all the character of debates: there is no sparring for victory among rival disputants. Nor do they exhibit the character of the Socratic dialogue, that is, a methodical quest for truth through a graduated course of shared inquiry. Rather, the questions posed are asked almost randomly—their binding principle being only the need to resolve conundrums in points of Buddhist teachings—and the answers flow in one direction, from the monk to the king, backed by the unimpeachable authority of the Buddha Word.

Milinda, as indicated above, may be confidently identified with the Greek king Menander, who was descended from Greeks of Bactria, the dominion founded by Alexander the Great corresponding to much of present-day Afghanistan. The Bactrian king Demetrius (ca. 189–167 B.C.) assumed power just when the Indian Mauryan empire was on the verge of collapse. Demetrius decided to exploit this situation to his advantage, and in a successful military campaign he took possession of Gandhāra, the Punjab and the Indus Valley, establishing his capital in Taxila. Because Demetrius preferred to focus on his military conquests, he entrusted the administration of his states to his viceroys, chosen from the ranks of his own family. By the year 180 B.C. the Bactrians were in full possession of the eastern Punjab and Avanti and even threatened the Magadhan capital of Pāṭaliputra. In no long time, however, dissension erupted among the Greek

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satraps, resulting in the division of the Bactrian empire into two rival kingdoms: a western Greek kingdom, which comprised Bactria proper and its satellites, and an eastern Greek kingdom comprising the Punjab, Gandhāra and Kapisa. Menander, who in his younger days had been the general who had laid siege to Pāṭaliputra, became the ruler of the eastern Greek kingdom following the death of the first eastern ruler, Apollodotus I (ca. 167–163 B.C.).[7] Menander's dates are estimated by Lamotte to be 163–150 B.C., though Rhys Davids dates his reign 150–110 B.C., while other scholars posit other figures, all in the same general period.

In the text Milinda asserts (p. 69) that he was born in the village of Kalasi, on the island of Alasanda. Some scholars, including Lamotte, identify this location with the town of Kapisi, in the district of Alexandria-under-the-Caucasus, though the validity of this identification seems problematic in view of the fact that Milinda's birthplace is 200 yojanas (= 1200 miles) from Sāgala in the eastern Punjab, where the discussion of the *Milindapañhā* takes place. The identity of the two places might nevertheless be argued on the ground that the figure for the distance given in the text is inaccurate.

Numerous finds of coins, as well as the writings of Greek historians, testify to the historical existence of Menander and to the locale and general dating of his reign. Plutarch writes that Menander, as a ruler, was noted for justice and enjoyed such popularity with his subjects that upon his death various cities contended for his ashes. The dispute was finally resolved in a manner that parallels the resolution of the conflict over the Buddha's remains recorded in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta: the city leaders agreed to divide the relics among themselves, each to erect a monument in his honour.[8]

According to the evidence of the *Milindapañhā*, the Bactrian king was not only a successful ruler but was also a keen scholar who had mastered the various arts and sciences of his time. It remains, of course, an open question whether the historical Menander ever participated in discussions concerning Buddhism, let alone whether the dialogues recorded in our text are to some degree veridical transcriptions of real discussions

7. The above is drawn from Etienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism* (Louvain-Paris: Peeters Press, 1988), pp. 373–79, 418–21.
8. Rhys Davids, pp. xix-xx.

between a Greek ruler and an Indian bhikkhu. However, if it is true that Menander's realm included Gandhāra (as seems likely), he would certainly have come into contact with Buddhism, which was well established in this region, and his intellectual curiosity may have induced him to enter into discussions with the religion's foremost representatives, its elder monks. The philosophical astuteness of the Buddhist doctrine, its clarity and profundity, as well as the serene deportment of the bhikkhus, may indeed have awakened his confidence and led him to accept the Dhamma as his own guide and refuge.

In any case, to account for our text, we might venture the hypothesis that the historical Menander had a lively interest in Buddhism, perhaps had even embraced Buddhism himself, and that our author drew upon this kernel of historical fact as the starting point for constructing a fictional dialogue. This dialogue was to serve as the scenario for an attempt to unravel, in a dramatic and entertaining manner, the numerous doctrinal and textual problems that Buddhist thinkers had run up against in their encounter with representatives of another philosophically sophisticated culture, that of Hellenistic Greece. This hypothesis might claim support from the fact that Bhante Nāgasena seems to be an entirely fictional character. His existence is not attested to in any other work except those which cite the *Milindapañhā*, nor are there any other records which substantiate his historicity. It can thus be assumed that he was invented by our author for didactic purposes, to represent the Buddhist point of view in its encounter with challenging queries from that alien but intellectually advanced cultural sphere which gave birth to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

The Present Edition

The preamble of the *Milindapañhā* (not included in this abridgement) states that the work is divided into six parts: Past History, Milinda's Questions, Questions on Distinguishing Marks, The Dilemmas, A Question Solved by Inference, and Questions on Talk of Similes. The preamble then states that Milinda's Questions are twofold: Questions on Distinguishing Marks and Questions for the Cutting Off of Perplexity. The Dilemmas are also said to be twofold: The Great Division and Questions on Talk about Yogins.[9] The latter is presumably identical with the chapter entitled "The

Special Qualities of Asceticism." Since this chapter on the ascetic practices constitutes a substantial portion of text, separated from the rest of the dilemmas by the "Question Solved by Inference," modern editors choose to treat the work as consisting of seven parts. This arrangement is followed here.

The present abridged version of the *Milindapañhā* has been compiled by Dr. N.K.G. Mendis. It is based primarily on the English translation by I.B. Horner, published by the Pali Text Society as *Milinda's Questions*. Horner made her translation from Trenckner's edition of the text, published in 1880 and described by Rhys Davids as "very able and accurate." Trenckner had worked with Sinhalese manuscripts, which differ in some respects from Burmese and Thai recensions of the Pali text. This abridgement contains roughly half of the original. The conclusion to the *Milinda* states that the book contains 262 questions, though in the editions available only 236 can be counted. Of these, the original contains, in Parts II and III, 85 questions, of which 56 are included here; in Part IV, 82 dilemmas, of which 35 are included; and in Part VII, 67 similes, of which 15 are included. These sections, as well as the longer sections on "A Question Solved by Inference" and "The Special Qualities of Asceticism" (each of which count as one question), have all been condensed. In making the necessary abridgements, however, we have attempted to preserve enough of the original to convey, not only the meaning, but the delightful flavour of the original.

While relying principally on Horner's translation, we have also consulted Rhys Davids' older English translation, *The Questions of King Milinda*, published in the Sacred Books of the East series; occasionally we have chosen Rhys Davids' renderings in preference to Horner's. Extensive revisions have been made in passages adopted from previous translations, and several passages that we felt were not successfully treated by the earlier translations have been translated afresh. To resolve a few technical problems presented by the text, we have also consulted the commentary on it by the Ven. Mingun Jetavun Sayadaw. Some of the explanations from this commentary have been incorporated into the notes.

9. This outline already exhibits some degree of incoherence, since the part named "Milinda's Questions" is first distinguished from "Questions on Distinguishing Marks" but is immediately afterwards said to include the latter as one of its divisions.

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Outline of the Work

The *Milindapañhā* covers a vast range of doctrinal topics, and to attempt to survey them all would require nothing less than a precis of the book that would far exceed the compass of an introduction. Thus we must here remain content merely to highlight a few of the more noteworthy themes and passages of the *Milinda.*

Following the charming background story which accounts for the meeting of the two protagonists, the dialogue between King Milinda and Bhante Nāgasena opens with a joust over the doctrine that has always been the philosophical crux of Buddhism, the principle of *anattā* or non-self. Nāgasena's way of introducing this topic—his declaration that "in the ultimate sense there is no person as such that is found"—refers obliquely to a doctrinal controversy that had flared up in the Buddhist schools in the early centuries after the Buddha's demise. One influential school of thought, the Sammitīyas, had advanced the thesis that the Buddha had conceived the person (*puggala*) as a kind of ersatz self which was neither identical with the psycho-physical organism (the "five aggregates") nor altogether distinct from them. It was this "person," the Sammitīyas held, that transmigrates from life to life and in the end attains final Nibbāna.[10] The other Buddhist schools, among them the Theravāda, reacted strongly to this "personalist thesis" (*puggalavāda*), denouncing it as an attempt to smuggle the notion of a self back into a system founded on the solid bedrock of the non-self teaching. Nāgasena's denial of ultimate reality to the person, and his insistence that the person has only a nominal identity, may thus be seen as an implicit rejoinder to the personalists coming from the camp of Buddhist orthodoxy. At the same time, Nāgasena does not deny all reality to the person. What he maintains—as he illustrates with his oft-quoted simile of the chariot—is that personal identity is a perfectly valid notion when it is understood and used correctly, as a convenient designation applied to the congeries of mental and material phenomena that make up the individual. It does not represent or point to a substantial self standing in some inscrutable relationship to these phenomena, and to conceive it in such a way is like imagining

10. For a detailed discussion of the personalist doctrine see Dutt, *Buddhist Sects in India*, pp. 183–206.

the chariot to be something apart from a functional arrangement of its components.

The *Milindapañhā* is not a polemical work, and thus despite this opening sally against the personalist thesis, it does not engage in sectarian disputation. The rest of Parts II and III deal with a variety of questions such as may have been raised by reflective Greeks who had encountered this strange, but strangely rational and level-headed, strain of Indian spirituality in their new-found domain. One series of questions that runs through Part II, and gives the part its title, concerns the "distinguishing marks" or characteristics (*lakkhaṇa*) of the mental phenomena investigated by Buddhist psychology. The first string of such questions concerns the five spiritual faculties (II, 6–12);[11] a later string of questions framed in similar terms concerns mental factors with more basic functions, such as contact, feeling, perception, and volition (II,26–32). Intervening questions inquire into the relations between different phases in the process of cognition. This concentration upon the detailed analysis of mental states and their relations comes to full efflorescence in the Abhidhamma, but while it seems likely that the Abhidhamma had already taken shape during the period when the *Milinda* was first composed, it is not referred to in the chapters understood to form the original nucleus of the work.

The doctrine of non-self repeatedly comes under examination in these early chapters, explored in its different ramifications. This topic must have been of special concern to the Greeks, with their strong philosophical traditions centred on belief in a soul, and they might have been particularly stumped by the problem of reconciling the principle of non-self with the inherent sense of personal identity, apparently confirmed by the persistence of the personality through time. Nāgasena offers an innovative resolution of this problem from the Buddhist perspective with his famous dictum that the individual, through the course of his life, is "neither the same nor another" (*na ca so na ca añño*) at any two particular stages. The Elder illustrates this thesis with the memorable simile of the flame that burns through the three watches of the night: a continuous process without any persisting substratum (II,13). The apparently incompatible doctrines of non-self and rebirth

11. All references in this introduction are to the part and section number of *this* edition.

are reconciled by pointing out that rebirth is an impersonal process which involves causal connection without transmigration of a soul (II,18; III,9). Moral responsibility is rescued by underscoring the continuity and inheritance of kamma across successive lives (III,2, 10, 11).

Other questions dealt with in these chapters focus on more specific aspects of kamma and the process of rebirth, the purpose of renunciation, dependent origination, time, the nature of Nibbāna, and a host of other issues. With a striking simile Nāgasena brings this phase of the discussion to a close by extolling the monumental task that the Buddha had accomplished in distinguishing the individual mental factors that concur in a single act of consciousness (III,26).

Parts II and III, as aforesaid, clearly form a unity and there is no thematic basis for their division into two. They seem to have been divided simply for the purpose of lending a tighter organization to the material to be included in the discussion between the two sages. It is these two parts that comprised the original nucleus of the work, as is indicated by the fact that both are united under the common rubric "Milinda's Questions." With the move to Part IV, The Dilemmas, a difference in atmosphere and style immediately forces itself to our notice. We are told that King Milinda had become a student of Bhante Nāgasena, learned the Tipiṭaka under his tutelage, and took upon himself the precepts and practices of a pious Buddhist lay devotee. The subject matter of this division is also more specialized. We are no longer presented with the kind of questions that might have been raised by a philosophical inquirer looking into the Dhamma from a gentle distance. Instead there is thrust upon us, as a matter of anxious concern (underscored by the circumstances in which this issue is first raised), a knotted tangle of conundrums that could occur only to one thoroughly conversant with the Buddhist scriptures.

The specific purpose of this division of the *Milinda*, as its title indicates, is to resolve dilemmas pertaining to the Buddhist system. Some of these dilemmas concern what appear to be contradictions between different statements in the scriptures; for example, the dilemma on the duration of the true Dhamma (IV,3), or on the Buddha's rebuke to a disciple (IV,13), or on his hesitation to teach the Dhamma (IV,21). Some concern apparent contradictions between formal canonical doctrine and popular Buddhist practice, e.g. on the paying

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of homage to the Buddha (IV,1), or on the recitation of protective verses (IV,10), or on the transference of merit to the dead (IV,30). Some dilemmas are not really "double-pronged questions" at all but simply grounds for perplexity, such as the question why there is only one Buddha at a time (IV,22), or about the reason for becoming a monk when laypersons can realize the Dhamma (IV,23), or why unenlightened people should be allowed to enter the Order (IV,24). Several discussions in this section highlight aspects of Buddhist psychology not dealt with earlier, such as the interesting discourse concerning dreams (IV,31). A substantial portion of dilemmas explore problems arising out of the Jātakas, the stories of the Buddha's past births, but these have been omitted from this compilation as being of only limited interest to a general readership.

Towards the end of the collection of dilemmas questions on the nature of Nibbāna come into prominence. The subject of Nibbāna is introduced in reply to the question "What is not born of a cause?" (IV,29). There it is explained that though Nibbāna, as unconditioned, does not arise from a cause, it may yet be realized by the practice of the path laid down by the Buddha for its realization. The final four questions all address the nature of the ultimate Buddhist goal (IV,32–35). Nāgasena explains that Nibbāna is entirely blissful, free from any admixture with suffering; that it is without a counterpart and yet may be illustrated by similes; that it may be realized by one who practises rightly; that it is not stored up anywhere and yet is accessible to one who, established on morality, applies proper attention. In framing Nāgasena's replies to these last dilemmas, the author rises to heights of great beauty and eloquence, the whole section pouring forth as a prose poem in praise of the Deathless.

The next two parts of the *Milindapañhā* sustain the rhapsodic tone reached at the close of the Dilemmas. These two parts seem to be actually amplifications of problems already addressed earlier in the work. Thus Part V, A Question Solved by Inference, reiterates the same problem raised by several questions in Part III relating to the historical reality of the Buddha (see III,7, 8). But while Nāgasena's answers to the earlier questions were brief and the similes kept simple, he now constructs an elaborate parable on "the Blessed One's City of

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Dhamma" into which he manages to incorporate virtually every aspect of the Buddha's Dispensation.

Part VI, The Special Qualities of Asceticism, is also an expanded dilemma dealing with a problem that had been touched on at several points from different angles (e.g. at IV,12 and 23). The problem is: if laypersons can realize the paths and fruits of the holy life while living at home in the midst of sense pleasures, what is the reason for becoming a monk and taking up a life of austerity? Although Nāgasena's reply is phrased specifically in terms of the ascetic practices, his answer constitutes in effect an eloquent and impassioned argument for the supremacy in Buddhism of the renunciant ideal, an argument graced with rising crescendos of exquisite similes.

The final part of the work, Part VII, Talk on Similes, is probably the weakest, marking the point where sheer ingenuity seems to have been pursued as an end in itself. This part may have been added still later, by a still different hand. The entire chapter is constructed upon a single principle: the enumeration of a list of similes for the *yogāvacara*, "the one who is devoted to mental training," and the detailed elaboration of each simile. The preface to this chapter announces 105 similes, though only 67 are found in the text.

There are two particularly intriguing problems intrinsic to the *Milindapañhā* that can only be briefly touched on in this introduction. Both are sometimes taken to be indicative that the work may be of non-Theravādin origins, though nothing conclusive can be drawn from them. One is the appearance in the work of a few minor doctrinal discrepancies from the final systematized expression of Theravāda thought as articulated in the commentaries of Ācariya Buddhaghosa. One instance occurs in the dilemma concerning the Buddha's ailments (IV,4), where it is said that "the Blessed One never experienced feeling born as the result of kamma," a statement that seems to be contradicted even by texts found in the Pali Canon itself. Another example is the declaration, in Dilemma 28, that there are two things in the world that are born neither of kamma nor cause nor physical change: space and Nibbāna. Although this passage does not go so far as to state that space is unconditioned—that status is reserved uniquely for Nibbāna—the coupling of space and Nibbāna in this way seems foreign to mainstream Theravāda thought. The assignment of space to

the class of unconditioned realities was made by the Sarvāstivādins, and we may see a trace of that notion here, though not its consummation. The threefold explanation of origination as due to kamma, cause (*hetu*) or physical change (*utu*) also lacks a place in the developed Theravāda treatment of conditionality. These deviations from mainstream Theravāda, while suggesting that the *Milinda* may have had its roots in another early school, do not force this conclusion upon us. It is possible that they represent merely minor doctrinal differences that were later discarded when the Pali Buddhist system received its final definition during the period when Buddhaghosa edited the ancient commentaries and set himself the aim of moulding the material at his disposal into a system of perfect internal consistency.

The second problem alluded to above is the citation in the work of a striking number of passages as being of canonical authority which yet, perplexingly, cannot be traced in the Pali Canon that we now possess. Horner has discussed this problem at length in the introduction to her translation, and she raises the possibility that the author "though he drew so extensively from the Pali Piṭakas, may not have been altogether unacquainted with Sarvāstivāda literature, and that this is where some at any rate of the untraced prose and verse passages may be found eventually."[12] It need only be pointed out here that these untraceable quotations, while puzzling, are not compelling evidence that the Milinda originated in a non-Theravāda school. The *Nettippakaraṇa*, a work of indubitable Theravāda pedigree, contains a great number of quotations treated as canonical which yet cannot be found in the Pali Canon. To account for these passages we might be equally justified in assuming that the Pali Canon, in an older recension, contained texts that have somehow been lost except for a few preserved fragmentarily in some extra-canonical works.

* * *

Although historical, doctrinal, and textual problems abound in the *Milindapañhā*, such problems are secondary in importance compared with the fact of the work itself—a literary monument exhibiting intellectual acuity, subtle humour,

12. Horner, p. xvii.

inspirational fervour, and bold imagination. The *Milinda* is the product of the encounter of two great civilizations—Hellenistic Greece and Buddhist India—and as such it throws into relief issues that are still very much alive today, as the modern West with its technological prowess seeks sources of ancient wisdom in the spirituality of the East. It is to be hoped that this BPS abridged edition of the *Milindapañhā* will enable the wisdom, wit, and beauty of this great Buddhist classic to reach a wider circle of readers.

BHIKKHU BODHI

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PART I

Past History

When the dispensation of Kassapa Buddha was being promulgated, a large number of monks were staying in a monastery near the river Ganges. One morning, while sweeping the compound of the monastery, an ordained monk asked a novice to throw away a heap of rubbish. The novice went about attending to his own business as if he had not heard the order. The ordained monk repeated the order for a second and a third time, but the novice still ignored it. The ordained monk then struck the novice with the broom handle. The novice became afraid and, crying, he threw away the rubbish while making his first aspiration: "Through this meritorious deed of throwing away the rubbish may I, wherever I am successively reborn until I attain Nibbāna, be of great might and glory like the midday sun." After he had thrown away the rubbish, he went to the Ganges to wash, and seeing the surge of the waves, he made his second aspiration: "May I, wherever I am successively reborn until I attain Nibbāna, be prompt in saying the right thing instantly and carry all before me like this surge of waves."

The monk who had struck the novice also went to the Ganges for a wash. He heard the novice's aspiration, and thinking, "If he who was merely instigated by me can have such hopes, what may I not attain to!" he made the following aspiration: "May I, wherever I am successively reborn until I attain Nibbāna, be prompt in answering questions and carry all before me like this surge of waves; and may I be able to unravel promptly and explain all the answers to questions put to me constantly by this young man."

For the whole period between Kassapa Buddha and his chronological successor, Gotama Buddha, the monk and the novice wandered from existence to existence among gods and humans. It is said that Gotama Buddha saw these two and predicted: "Five hundred years after I have attained complete Nibbāna these two will reappear, and unravelling the matter by questions and by similes, they will make clear the Dhamma

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and Discipline taught by me."[13] The novice became King Milinda, and the monk became Venerable Nāgasena.

In addition to being successful in the battlefield King Milinda was a scholar who mastered the arts and sciences prevailing during his period. He had a searching mind and would seek leaders of various schools of thought and ask probing questions pertaining to metaphysics.[14] He never got complete satisfaction from any of the ascetics or brahmins he approached and, in despair, he said: "India is indeed empty, India is void indeed! There is no ascetic or brahmin able to converse with me to dispel my doubts."

At that time there were many arahats living on the Guarded Plateau on a Himalayan slope. One of them, the Venerable Assagutta, heard with his psychic powers the king's utterance. He summoned the Order of monks and asked: "Your reverences, is there any monk capable of conversing with King Milinda to dispel his doubts?" The monks remained silent even after the question was asked for the second and third time. The Venerable Assagutta said: "Your reverences, in the Realm of the Thirty-three Deities there is a mansion named Ketumatī to the east of Vejayanta. A young deva named Mahāsena is living there. He is capable of conversing with this king to dispel his doubts."

Then those arahats vanished from the Himalayas and appeared in the Realm of the Thirty-three Deities. Sakka, chief of the deities, saw those monks coming from a distance. He approached the Venerable Assagutta, greeted him, stood at one side and said: "Revered sir, great is the Order of monks that has arrived. I am at your service; what can I do for you?" Venerable Assagutta said: "Sire, this King Milinda, in the town of Sāgala in India, is a disputant hard to equal, hard to

13. No such prediction is recorded in any other text, canonical or post-canonical. The figure five hundred can be taken to represent a long period of time and should not be treated literally as a basis for dating King Menander.
14. The text, here abridged, is modelled after the Sāmaññaphala Sutta (DN 2). King Milinda's ministers suggest that he visit the "six heretical teachers," as King Ajātasattu had reportedly done. He visits Pūraṇa Kassapa and Makkhali Gosāla and befuddles them with his queries. No explanation is given as to how these ascetics, the Buddha's contemporaries, managed to remain alive and active for five hundred years.

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overcome. He approaches the Order of monks and worries that Order by asking questions by means of professing a wrong view."

Then Sakka said: "Revered sir, this King Milinda, deceasing from here, has arisen among men. There is a young deva named Mahāsena who lives in the Ketumatī mansion. He is capable of conversing with King Milinda to dispel his doubts. We will entreat this young deva to arise in the world of men." Then Sakka vanished from the Order of monks, entered the Ketumatī mansion, embraced Mahāsena and told him: "The Order of monks is entreating you, my dear, to arise in the world of men." Mahāsena replied: "Revered sir, I have no desire for the world of men that is given over to kamma. The world of men is dark. It is here in a deva world that I will attain ever higher and higher and attain final Nibbāna." Sakka pleaded with Mahāsena for the second and third time and got the same answer.

Then Venerable Assagutta spoke to Mahāsena: "My dear, we have surveyed the world including the devas but see none except you who, refuting what King Milinda says, is capable of supporting the Dispensation. The Order of monks is entreating you to be reborn in the world of men and to support and teach the Dispensation of the Buddha, Master of the Ten Powers."[15] When Mahāsena heard that by refuting King Milinda he would be able to support the Dispensation he felt pleased and elated and gave his consent saying: "It is good, revered sir, I will arise in the world of men." The monks, having concluded their business in the deva world, vanished from there and re-appeared on the Guarded Plateau.

When the monks were assembled on the Guarded Plateau Venerable Assagutta said: "Your reverences, there is some monk who has not come to this convention." Then one of the monks spoke: "There is, revered sir, Venerable Rohaṇa who left a week ago for a Himalayan mountain-slope. He has attained cessation."[16] At that very moment Venerable Rohaṇa, emerging from cessation, thought: "The Order is waiting for me."

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15. On the ten powers of the Tathāgata, see M I 69–71.
16. This refers to the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññāvedayitanirodha*), a meditative state in which all consciousness and mental activity are temporarily suspended. Its attainment requires mastery of the eight jhānas or absorptions as well as the prior attainment of the stage of non-returner or arahatship.

Vanishing from the Himalayan mountain-slope he appeared before the arahats on the Guarded Plateau. Venerable Assagutta told him: "Now, revered Rohaṇa, when the Buddha's Dispensation is dissolving do you not see what should be done for the Order?"

"I was lacking in attention, revered sir," replied Venerable Rohaṇa.

"Well then, you undergo a punishment."

"What shall I do, revered sir?"

"Reverend Rohaṇa, there is a brahmin village called Kajaṅgala where a brahmin named Soṇuttara lives. He will have a son named Nāgasena. Visit that family for alms food for seven years and ten months, then draw that boy Nāgasena away and let him go forth. When he has gone forth you will be free of your punishment."

"It is good," replied Venerable Rohaṇa.

Mahāsena passed away from the Realm of the Thirty-three Deities and was reborn in the womb of Soṇuttara's wife. Although Venerable Rohaṇa visited the home of Soṇuttara for seven years and ten months, he did not receive any alms food, nor even the polite refusal, "Pass on, revered sir." One day, after that period of seven years and ten months, when Soṇuttara was returning home after some business, he saw Venerable Rohaṇa on the opposite side of the road and asked him: "Did you, mendicant, come to our house?" "Yes, brahmin, I came," was the reply. "Did you receive anything?" "Yes, brahmin, I received," said Venerable Rohaṇa.

Soṇuttara was not pleased. He went to his house and enquired whether anything had been given to the mendicant. He was told: "We gave him nothing." Next day Soṇuttara sat at the door of his house with the intention of rebuking Venerable Rohaṇa for telling a lie. When Venerable Rohaṇa arrived at his house Soṇuttara said: "You received nothing at our house yesterday but you said you received something. Are you allowed to lie?" Venerable Rohaṇa replied: "For seven years and ten months I visited your house and did not receive even a polite refusal, 'Pass on,' but yesterday I was addressed with the words 'Pass on' and it was in reference to those friendly words that I spoke thus."

Soṇuttara thought to himself: "Having received only so little as those friendly words, these monks say that they received something. So what will they not say when they get some

food?" He then gave the monk the food that had been prepared for himself and told him that from then on he would obtain alms food every day. The next day Venerable Rohaṇa was invited into the house because Soṇuttara was impressed with his demeanour and from then on Venerable Rohaṇa had his meals in the house. Each day, before he left the house after the meal, he spoke a few words of the Buddha.

Ten months after conception Soṇuttara's wife gave birth to a son who was named Nāgasena. When he was seven years old his father told him: "Dear Nāgasena, you should train yourself in the trainings of a brahmin family." "What, father, are those trainings?" asked Nāgasena. "The three Vedas," replied Soṇuttara. "Well then, father, I will learn them," said Nāgasena.

A brahmin teacher was employed and young Nāgasena memorized the three Vedas after a single repetition. He then asked his father: "Father, is there anything more to be trained in in this brahmin family?" "Dear Nāgasena, there is nothing more to be trained in; this is the full extent." Then, after serious contemplation, Nāgasena concluded: "Empty indeed are these Vedas, void indeed are these Vedas, pithless, without pith." And he was remorseful and displeased.

At this time Venerable Rohaṇa was living in the Vattaniya Hermitage. Knowing with his psychic powers the reasoning in the mind of young Nāgasena, Venerable Rohaṇa vanished from the hermitage and appeared in the Kajangala village. Nāgasena saw him approaching from a distance and was pleased and uplifted. He thought: "Perhaps this one who has gone forth might know what is the pith."

He approached Venerable Rohaṇa and asked: "Who are you, dear sir, that you are shaven and wear saffron robes?"

"Boy, I am called one who has gone forth."

"Why are you, dear sir, called one who has gone forth?"

"One who has gone forth has to banish evil stains, therefore I am called one who has gone forth."

"Why is your hair, dear sir, not like that of other men?"

"When one who has gone forth cuts off the hair and the beard, then there are no impediments such as having to comb and shampoo the hair and having to use perfumes, unguents and dyes. Furthermore, when the hair falls off people are upset and grieved."

"Why are your clothes, dear sir, not like those of others?"

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"Beautiful clothes, connected with sense pleasures, are marks of householders. Whatever perils that spring from clothes do not exist for one who wears saffron robes."

"Do you, dear sir, know the crafts?"

"Yes, boy, I know the crafts and even the supreme mantra in the world."

"Will you be able to teach me that, dear sir?"

"Yes, boy, I can."

"Well then, teach me."

"This is not the right time, boy. We have entered among the houses for alms."

Then Nāgasena took Venerable Rohaṇa's bowl, led him into the house, and with his own hands, served him sumptuous food. After Venerable Rohaṇa had eaten, Nāgasena said: "Good sir, teach me the mantra now." Venerable Rohaṇa replied: "Boy, when you are without impediments and have got your parents' consent to go forth, when you wear the robes as I do, then I will teach you."

Nāgasena then approached his parents for their consent to go forth, saying: "This one who has gone forth will not teach me the supreme mantra in the world unless I go forth in his presence. I will learn that mantra after I have gone forth." The parents, thinking that their son would return to them after learning the mantra, gave him their consent to go forth. Then Venerable Rohaṇa took Nāgasena to the Guarded Plateau and let him go forth in the presence of the arahats.

After he received the going forth Venerable Nāgasena told Venerable Rohaṇa: "I have taken your dress upon myself, revered one. Now teach me the mantra." Venerable Rohaṇa then wondered what he should teach first, the Discourses or the Abhidhamma. He decided to teach the Abhidhamma as he thought Venerable Nāgasena was clever and would master it easily. Venerable Nāgasena mastered the whole of the Abhidhamma after only one exposition. He then approached the arahats on the Guarded Plateau and told them he would propound the whole of the Abhidhamma in detail. The arahats asked him to do that, and for seven months Venerable Nāgasena propounded the seven compositions of the Abhidhamma in detail. When Venerable Nāgasena was twenty years of age he was ordained by the arahats on the Guarded Plateau.

Early one morning, Venerable Nāgasena took his bowl and robe and entered the village together with his preceptor on the

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alms round. On entering the village he thought: "Empty indeed is my preceptor, foolish indeed is my preceptor in that, having set aside the rest of the Buddha's word, he taught me the Abhidhamma first." Venerable Rohaṇa, reading Venerable Nāgasena's mind, told him: "You thought unsuitably, Nāgasena. That was not suitable for you." Venerable Nāgasena, amazed that Venerable Rohaṇa was able to read his mind, apologized to him, saying: "Forgive me, revered sir. I will not think such thoughts again." Venerable Rohaṇa said: "I do not forgive you, Nāgasena, on that promise. But there is a town called Sāgala where King Milinda is reigning. He is worrying the Order of monks by asking questions and by professing a wrong view. If you go there and tame that king and make him gain confidence in our teaching, then I will forgive you." Venerable Nāgasena replied: "Let this one King Milinda be. Let all the kings in the whole of India come and ask me questions, revered sir, and, in replying, I will mow them all down with my replies, if only you will forgive me." Venerable Rohaṇa said: "I do not forgive you." Venerable Nāgasena asked: "Well then, revered sir, in whose presence shall I spend the three months of the rains?"

Venerable Nāgasena was assigned to spend the three months of the rains with Venerable Assagutta in the Vattaniya Hermitage. Venerable Rohaṇa told him: "Go, Nāgasena, approach Venerable Assagutta and in my name salute his feet with your head and say to him: 'My preceptor, revered sir, salutes your feet with his head and asks if you are free from disease, without illness, buoyant, strong, and living in comfort; he sent me to stay with you for these three months.' If he says, 'What is your preceptor's name?' you should say, 'He is called the Elder Rohaṇa, revered sir.' If he says, 'What is my name?' you should say, 'My preceptor knows your name, revered sir.'" Then Venerable Nāgasena said, "Very well, revered sir," and respectfully left the presence of Venerable Rohaṇa.

Venerable Nāgasena then approached the Vattaniya Hermitage, went up to Venerable Assagutta, paid his respects to him, stood on one side and said exactly what he had been instructed to say. Venerable Assagutta questioned him just as Venerable Rohaṇa said he would. Venerable Assagutta then said: "It is good, Nāgasena, put away your bowl and robe." Saying, "Very good, revered sir," Venerable Nāgasena put away his bowl and robe. The next day Venerable Nāgasena swept his

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teacher's cell and set out the water for washing and the tooth cleaners. Venerable Assagutta swept the cell again, threw out the water and tooth cleaners, and fetched another supply of water and tooth cleaners without making any conversation. This went on for seven days. On the seventh day he asked Venerable Nāgasena the same questions he had asked on the first day, and on receiving the same replies, he allowed Venerable Nāgasena to spend the rainy season there.

At that time an important woman lay follower had supported Venerable Assagutta for thirty years. At the end of the three months of the rains she approached Venerable Assagutta and asked him whether there was another monk staying with him. When he told her that there was a monk named Nāgasena staying with him, she invited him and Venerable Nāgasena for a meal on the following day. When they went to her house the next day she served the two monks a sumptuous meal with her own hands. After the meal Venerable Assagutta asked Venerable Nāgasena to give thanks to the lady and went away. She then told Venerable Nāgasena: "Dear Nāgasena, I am old, thank me with a profound talk on the Dhamma."

Venerable Nāgasena gave his thanks with a profound talk on the Abhidhamma connected with supramundane matters, dealing with emptiness. As she was listening and reflecting, the spotless, immaculate vision of the Dhamma arose in her thus: "All that is subject to arising is subject to cessation." After he had given his thanks and was reflecting on the Dhamma he himself had taught her, Venerable Nāgasena aroused insight and was established in the fruit of stream-entry as he was sitting on that very seat. With his psychic powers Venerable Assagutta knew what happened and said in approval: "It is good, it is good Nāgasena, that by one arrow shot two great persons are pierced!"

Venerable Nāgasena then went to Venerable Assagutta, worshipped him and sat on one side. Venerable Assagutta told him: "Go, Nāgasena, to Pāṭaliputta. Venerable Dhammarakkhita is living in the Asoka Monastery there. Master the Buddha's word in his presence."

"How far from here, revered sir, is Pāṭaliputta?"

"A hundred yojanas, Nāgasena."[17]

"That is a long way, revered sir, and it will be hard to get food on the way."

17. A *yojana* is about seven miles.

"Go, Nāgasena, you will get good alms on the way."

"Very well, revered sir," said Venerable Nāgasena. He then paid his respects to Venerable Assagutta, took his bowl and robe and set out to Pāṭaliputta.

At that time a merchant of Pāṭaliputta was travelling to Pāṭaliputta with many wagons. When he saw Venerable Nāgasena he greeted him and asked: "Where are you going, my dear?"

"To Pāṭaliputta, householder."

"That is good, my dear, we too are going to Pāṭaliputta. It will be convenient for you to go with us."

Because the merchant was impressed with the way Venerable Nāgasena conducted himself, he served him a sumptuous meal with his own hands. After the meal the merchant took a low seat, sat on a side and asked:

"What is your name, my dear?"

"I am called Nāgasena, householder."

"My dear, do you know the Buddha's word?"

"Householder, I know the Abhidhamma."

"That is a gain for me, my dear, for I too am a student of the Abhidhamma. Recite some passages from it."

Venerable Nāgasena taught the Abhidhamma to the merchant. While the merchant was listening to the talk, the spotless, immaculate vision of the Dhamma arose in him. He then sent the wagons ahead and walked after them. When he reached a forked path he told Venerable Nāgasena: "This, dear Nāgasena, is the road to the Asoka Monastery. Out of compassion please accept this lovely woollen blanket." Venerable Nāgasena accepted the blanket. Pleased and elated, the merchant paid his respects to Venerable Nāgasena and went on his way.

Venerable Nāgasena went to the Asoka Monastery, approached Venerable Dhammarakkhita and told him the reason for his arrival. In three months, after only one recitation, he memorized, under the tutelage of Venerable Dhammarakkhita, the three divisions of the Buddha's word.[18] He spent the next three months reflecting on the meaning of what he

18. The three divisions of the Buddha Word are the three "baskets" (*piṭaka*) of the canon: the Vinaya Piṭaka, the Sutta Piṭaka, and the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, respectively the collection of monastic discipline, the collection of discourses, and the collection of philosophical treatises.

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had memorized. Venerable Dhammarakkhita then told him: "As a herdsman tends the cows, Nāgasena, but others enjoy the products, even so are you. Though remembering the word of the Buddha, you are not one who partakes of the fruit of recluseship." Venerable Nāgasena replied: "Let that be, revered sir, say no more."

That very night Venerable Nāgasena attained arahatship and, with it, the four analytic knowledges.[19] The arahats who had assembled on the Guarded Plateau sent a message to Venerable Nāgasena: "Let Nāgasena come, we are anxious to see Nāgasena." Venerable Nāgasena vanished from the Asoka Monastery and appeared before the arahats. They told him: "This King Milinda worries the Order of monks, Nāgasena, with his talk and counter-talk, and with the questions he asks. It would be good, Nāgasena, if you would go to him and tame him." Venerable Nāgasena replied: "Let this one King Milinda be. If all the kings in the whole of India were to come and ask me questions, I would mow them all down with my replies. Go, revered sirs, without fear to Sāgala."

One lovely moonlit night King Milinda asked his ministers: "What ascetic or brahmin will be able to converse with me and dispel my doubts?" His ministers replied: "There is an Elder named Āyupāla living at the Sankheyya Hermitage. He is skilled in the three divisions of the Buddha's word and in traditional lore. Go, sire, to him and ask your questions." The king then sent a messenger to Venerable Āyupāla to inform him that he was going to visit him. Venerable Āyupāla said: "Well, then, let him come." Accompanied by the Bactrian Greeks, King Milinda set out for the Sankheyya Hermitage in a splendid chariot. On arrival at the hermitage he exchanged pleasant greetings with Venerable Āyupāla, sat on one side and asked him: "Of what use to you, revered Āyupāla, is the going forth and what is the higher goal for you?" Venerable Āyupāla replied: "Going forth is for the sake of faring in the Dhamma, faring in spiritual calm."

"But is there, revered sir, any householder at all who is a farer in the Dhamma, a farer in spiritual calm?"

"Yes, sire, there are householders who are farers in the Dhamma, farers in spiritual calm. When the Blessed One set

19. *Paṭisambhidā*: the analytical knowledge of meaning (or effects), of doctrine (or conditions), of language, and of ingenuity in expression and knowledge. See below, p. 155.

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rolling the Dhamma Wheel in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares, there was an understanding of the Dhamma by eighteen myriads of Brahmā deities and innumerable other deities. All these were householders, not those who had gone forth. Again, when the Blessed One delivered the Mahāsamaya Discourse, the Discourse on the Great Blessings, the Discourse on Even Mind, the Exhortation to Rāhula, and the Parābhava Discourse, there was an understanding of the Dhamma by innumerable deities.[20] All these were householders, not those who had gone forth."

"Well then, revered Āyupāla, your going forth is useless. It must be because of some evil kamma done in the past that sons of the Sakyans go forth as ascetics and observe the ascetic practices. Revered Āyupāla, those monks who eat but one meal a day are perhaps thieves who formerly robbed others of their food and, as a result of that kamma, they eat only one meal a day and have no chance to enjoy food constantly.[21] That is no virtue on their part, no brilliance, no holy life.

"Those monks who live in the open air are perhaps thieves who formerly plundered whole villages and destroyed the homes of others and, as a result of that kamma, live in the open air and have no chance to enjoy lodgings. That is no virtue on their part, no brilliance, no holy life. Those monks who remain in a sitting position are perhaps thieves who formerly were highwaymen who seized people on the high road, bound them and left them sitting there and, as a result of that kamma, they remain in a sitting position and have no chance of lying on a bed. That is no virtue on their part, no brilliance, no holy life."

When the king had spoken, Venerable Āyupāla remained silent and said nothing in reply. The Bactrians told the king: "The Elder, sire, is learned, but he is diffident and says nothing in reply." Seeing that Venerable Āyupāla had become silent, the king clapped his hands and shouted: "India is indeed empty, India is void indeed! There is no ascetic or brahmin

20. The Mahāsamaya Sutta is DN 20; the Discourse on Great Blessings (Mahāmaṅgala Sutta) is found at Sn p. 46 and Khp V; the Discourse on Even Mind (Samacitta Sutta) is at A I 64–65; the Exhortation to Rāhula is probably MN 147; the Parābhava Discourse is Sn 91–115.
21. This paragraph and the next refer to the ascetic practices observed by Buddhist monks.

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capable of conversing with me to dispel my doubts." As he looked around his company of Bactrian Greeks and saw how fearless and self-possessed they were, he thought to himself: "Surely there must be some other learned monk who is capable of conversing with me or these Greek Bactrians would not be so confident." He spoke again to the Bactrians: "Is there, my good men, some other learned monk who is capable of conversing with me to dispel my doubts?"

Now at that time Venerable Nāgasena was surrounded by a group of ascetics. He was the leader of an Order, leader of a group and teacher of a group. He was well known, famous, and highly esteemed by the people. He was wise, disciplined, and confident. He was well versed in the Three Collections and was an expert in the nine divisions of the scriptures[22] and he had attained to the perfections.[23] He was skilled in the teaching of the Dhamma, in answering questions promptly and in getting rid of conflict. His enunciation was lovely. He was venerated and esteemed by monks and nuns, male and female lay devotees, kings and kings' ministers. He was the recipient of the four requisites of robe material, alms food, lodgings and medicine. This Venerable Nāgasena, walking on tour among the villages, towns and cities, arrived in due course at the town of Sāgala and stayed in the Sankheyya Hermitage with a very large number of monks.

A Bactrian officer named Devamantiya told King Milinda: "There is an Elder named Nāgasena staying in the Sankheyya Hermitage. He is wise, experienced, clever, disciplined, and confident. Go, sire, and ask Venerable Nāgasena your questions. He is capable of conversing with you and can dispel your doubts." When the king heard the name "Nāgasena" he suddenly became afraid, greatly agitated, and his hair stood on

22. The nine divisions of the scriptures (or "nine limbs of the Word of the Buddha") are: (1) discourses in prose; (2) discourses in mixed prose and verse; (3) the expositions; (4) verses; (5) the inspired utterances (*udāna*); (6) the sayings (*itivuttaka*); (7) the birth stories (*jātaka*); (8) the wonders; and (9) the miscellanies. This classification of the teachings is given at M I 133.

23. The perfections (*pāramī*) are the ten sublime virtues of liberality, morality, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, resolution, loving kindness and equanimity. See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Discourse on the All-Embracing Net of Views* (BPS 2007), Part IV. Here it signifies the perfections of a disciple, not of a Buddha.

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end. He asked Devamantiya: "Is the bhikkhu Nāgasena really able to converse with me?" Devamantiya said: "Venerable Nāgasena is capable of conversing with the gods, even with Great Brahmā, so why not with a human being?" Then King Milinda told Devamantiya: "Send a messenger to Venerable Nāgasena to inform him that I wish to call on him." When the message was conveyed Venerable Nāgasena said: "Well, then, let him come."

Accompanied by many Bactrians, King Milinda went to the Sankheyya Hermitage in a splendid carriage. Venerable Nāgasena was sitting in a pavilion with a large number of monks. When the king saw Venerable Nāgasena's company from a distance he asked Devamantiya: "Whose is this large company?" "It is the company of Venerable Nāgasena, sire." The king became afraid, greatly agitated, and his hair stood on end. Thinking, "Do not let these despise me," he told Devamantiya: "Do not, Devamantiya, indicate Venerable Nāgasena to me. I will recognize him without his being pointed out." "Very well, sire, find him yourself," said Devamantiya.

At that time Venerable Nāgasena was sitting in the midst of the Order of monks, some in front of him and some behind. The king saw Venerable Nāgasena sitting there like a maned lion, devoid of fear and dread, devoid of terror, devoid of trepidation. It was by this that he recognized Venerable Nāgasena and told Devamantiya: "That one is Nāgasena." Devamantiya replied: "Yes, sire, that is Nāgasena. It is good that you recognized him." The king was glad that he had been able to recognize Venerable Nāgasena without his being pointed out, but once again, he became afraid, greatly agitated, and his hair stood on end. Therefore it is said:

> At the sight of Nāgasena, wise and pure,
> Tamed in the supreme training,
> Milinda uttered these words:
> "Many are the speakers I have seen,
> Many the discussions I have held,
> But there was no fear like unto this,
> No terror as is mine today.
> Surely defeat must be my lot today
> And victory for Nāgasena
> Since my mind is not composed."

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PART II

Questions on Distinguishing Marks

1. No Person is Found (I,1)

King Milinda then approached Venerable Nāgasena, exchanged pleasant greetings with him and sat on one side. Venerable Nāgasena greeted the king in return and gladdened his heart. King Milinda asked Venerable Nāgasena: "How is the revered one known? What is your name, revered sir?"

"Sire, I am known as Nāgasena. My companions in the holy life address me as Nāgasena. Though parents give such names as Nāgasena or Sūrasena or Vīrasena or Sīhasena, this 'Nāgasena' is only a designation, a label, a concept, an expression, a mere name because there is no person as such that is found."[24]

Then King Milinda spoke thus: "Good sirs, let the Bactrian Greeks and the party of monks hear me. This Nāgasena says that 'no person as such is found.'" He then spoke thus to Venerable Nāgasena:

"If, revered Nāgasena, there is 'no person as such,' who gives you robes, alms food, lodgings, and medicinal requisites, and who makes use of them? Who guards morality, who meditates, who realizes the paths and fruits and attains Nibbāna? Who kills living beings, who takes what is not given, who indulges in sexual misconduct, who utters lies and who imbibes intoxicating drinks? Who commits the five evil acts that bear fruit without delay?[25] Therefore, there is nothing wholesome or unwholesome, there is no one that does or makes another do wholesome or unwholesome acts, and there is neither fruit nor

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24. The Pali words are: *saṅkhā*, *samaññā*, *paññatti*, *vohāra*, *nāmamatta*. These are all synonyms, intended to show that the person (*puggala*) has merely a conventional reality. "There is no person as such that is found" (*na h'ettha puggalo upalabbhati*) in the sense that the person is not apprehended as a datum in its own right but only by ascription to such truly existent phenomena as the five aggregates. Just below the same phrase will be repeated with the addition of the qualification *paramatthato*, "in the ultimate sense." See note 29 on page 31.

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result of good or bad deeds. Also, revered Nāgasena, if someone were to kill you there would be no murder. You have no teacher, no preceptor, no ordination. If you say, 'Co-farers in the holy life address me as "Nāgasena,"' what is this Nāgasena? Is it, revered sir, the hairs of the head that are Nāgasena?"

"No, sire."

"Are the hairs of the body Nāgasena?"

"No, sire."

"Are the nails ... The teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, membranes, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach, faeces, brain, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, lymph, saliva, mucus, joint fluid or urine ... are any of them Nāgasena?"[26]

"No, sire"

"Is material form, revered sir, Nāgasena?"

"No, sire."

"Or feeling, perception, mental formations or consciousness ... are any of them Nāgasena?"

"No, sire."

"Then, revered sir, are material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness all together Nāgasena?"[27]

"No, sire."

"Well then, revered sir, is Nāgasena apart from material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness?"

"No, sire."

"Revered sir, though I have been asking you repeatedly, I do not see this Nāgasena. Nāgasena is only a sound.[28] For who

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25. The five evil acts are matricide, parricide, killing an arahat, drawing a Buddha's blood with a mind set on murder, and causing a schism in the Sangha. Each of these deeds ripens in a rebirth in hell.
26. These form the thirty-two parts of the body, a common subject of meditation on the impurity of the body.
27. These are the five aggregates of existence (*pañcakkhandhā*). They are evanescent and occur in various combinations at any particular time to comprise the person. This analysis does not mean that a person is reducible to a mere combination of disjointed parts. The individual does have a unity, but this unity is functional and in process, not substantial and unchanging.
28. *Nāgasenasaddo yeva.*

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here is Nāgasena? You, revered sir, have spoken a falsehood, an untruth. There is no Nāgasena."

Venerable Nāgasena then spoke thus: "You, sire, have been delicately nurtured as fits your noble birth. If, sire, you walk at noon-time on the hot scorching ground, trampling on sharp grit, pebbles and sand, your feet will hurt you, your body will be tired, your mind will be disturbed and you will suffer bodily pain. Now, did you come on foot or in a vehicle?"

"I, revered sir, did not come on foot. I came in a chariot."

"If, sire, you came in a chariot, show me the chariot. Is the pole the chariot, sire?"

"No, revered sir."

"Is the axle the chariot?"

"No, revered sir."

"Are the wheels the chariot?"

"No, revered sir."

"Is the body of the chariot ... the flag-staff, the yoke, the reins, the goad ... are any of them the chariot?"

"No, revered sir."

"Then, sire, are the pole, the axle, the wheels, the body, the flag-staff, the yoke, the reins, the goad all together the chariot?"

"No, revered sir."

"Well then, sire, is the chariot apart from the pole, the axle, the wheels, the body, the flag-staff, the yoke, the reins and the goad?"

"No, sire."

"Sire, though I have been asking you repeatedly, I do not see this chariot. Chariot is only a sound. What then is the chariot you say you came in? You, sire, have spoken a falsehood, an untruth. There is no chariot. You are king over all India, a mighty monarch. Of whom are you afraid that you speak a lie? Let the Bactrian Greeks and all the monks listen to me. This King Milinda says, 'I have come by chariot,' but on being asked to show the chariot, he does not show it. Is it proper to approve of that?"

When Venerable Nāgasena had spoken thus, all the Bactrian Greeks applauded him and told King Milinda: "Now, sire, speak if you can." King Milinda then addressed Venerable Nāgasena: "I am not, revered sir, speaking a lie. It is because of the pole, because of the axle, the wheels, the body, the

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flag-staff, the yoke, the reins and because of the goad that 'chariot' exists as a mere designation."

"It is good, sire, that you understand a chariot. Even so is it for me, sire, because of the hairs of the head ... because of the urine, because of material form ... because of consciousness, that 'Nāgasena' exists as a mere designation. However, in the ultimate sense there is no person as such that is found.[29] This, sire, was spoken by the nun Vajirā in the presence of the Blessed One (S I 135):

Just as when the parts are rightly set
The word 'chariot' is spoken,
So when there are the aggregates
It is the convention to say 'a being'."

"It is wonderful, revered Nāgasena, it is marvellous. Your explanations are brilliant. If the Buddha were still here he would applaud. It is good, it is good, Nāgasena."

2. The Speech of the Learned (I,2)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, will you converse with me?"

"I will converse if you, sire, will converse in the speech of the learned, but if you converse in the speech of kings I will not converse."

"How, revered Nāgasena, do the learned converse?"

"When the learned are conversing, sire, there is a turning over and an unravelling of the subject; then there is a refutation and an acknowledgement of a mistake; distinctions and contradistinctions are drawn; yet, thereby, they are not angered. It is thus, sire, that the learned converse."

"And how, revered sir, do kings converse?"

"When kings are conversing, sire, they approve of some matter and order punishment for anyone who disagrees with that matter, saying: 'Inflict a punishment on him.' It is thus, sire, that kings converse."

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29. *Paramatthato pan'ettha puggalo n'upalabbhati.* The word *paramattha* takes on a fundamental role in the history of Buddhist philosophy. It signifies that which possesses reality as an item of direct inspection, as contrasted with what has merely conventional or conceptual existence. An ultimately real person thus becomes effectively equivalent to a person conceived as a self (*attā*).

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"I, revered sir, will converse in the speech of the learned, not in the speech of kings. Let the revered one converse unreservedly as he converses with a monk or a novice or a lay follower or with a monastery attendant. Let the revered one converse thus, let him not be afraid."

"It is well, sire."

"I have a question to ask you, revered Nāgasena."

"Ask it, sire."

"I have asked it, revered sir."

"That has been answered, sire."

"What have you answered, revered sir?"

"But what was asked by you, sire?"

King Milinda then thought: "This monk is learned, he is competent to converse with me. I have so many questions to ask him but before I ask them all the sun will set. Suppose I were to converse with him in the palace tomorrow?" Having asked Devamantiya to tell Venerable Nāgasena that the discussion should continue in the palace on the following day, the king rose from his seat, took leave of Venerable Nāgasena, mounted his horse and departed muttering, "Nāgasena, Nāgasena!"

3. Why Go Forth? (I,5)

On the following day Venerable Nāgasena went to the palace with a large number of monks. King Milinda with his own hands served the monks a sumptuous meal and presented each monk with a pair of woven cloths and Venerable Nāgasena with a set of three robes. Then he said: "Revered Nāgasena, sit down here with ten monks and let the rest go away." The king took a low seat, sat at a respectable distance and spoke thus: "Revered Nāgasena, what shall we discuss?"

"We, sire, are in need of a goal; let the discussion be about the goal."

"Of what use to you, revered Nāgasena, is the going forth and what is the highest goal for you?"

"Why, sire, that this suffering might be stopped and another suffering might not arise; our going forth is for this goal, sire, and our highest goal is final Nibbāna through non-clinging."

"But, revered sir, do all go forth for such a goal?"

"No, sire. Some go forth for such a goal, but others go forth from fear of kings or from fear of thieves or because they have

debts and others go forth for the sake of a livelihood. But those who go forth rightly go forth for such a goal."

"And have you yourself, revered sir, gone forth for such a goal?"

"I was a boy, sire, when I went forth so I did not know that I was going forth for this goal, but it occurred to me thus: 'These recluses, sons of the Sakyans, are learned and will make me train myself.' Now that I have been trained by them I know and see that going forth is for this goal."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

4. Who Takes Rebirth? (I,6)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, is there anyone who, when dead, does not take rebirth?"[30]

"Some take rebirth, some do not."

"Who takes rebirth, who does not take rebirth?"

"One who has defilements takes rebirth, sire; one who is without defilements does not take rebirth."

"Will you yourself take rebirth?"

"If I should have clinging, sire, I will take rebirth, but if I am without clinging I will not take rebirth."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

5. Attention and Wisdom (I,7)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, does he who does not take rebirth not take rebirth because of proper attention?"[31]

"Sire, it is because of proper attention, and it is because of wisdom, and it is because of other wholesome mental states."

"Revered sir, is proper attention the same as wisdom?"

"No, sire, attention is one thing, wisdom is another. Goats, sheep, cows, buffaloes, camels and donkeys have attention but they do not have wisdom."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

30. *Paṭisandahati*, lit. reconnect. This refers to the linking of one existence, at the moment of rebirth, with the existence that immediately precedes it.

31. *Yoniso manasikāra*, also translated as wise attention or methodical attention.

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6. The Marks of Attention and Wisdom (I,8)

King Milinda said: "What is the distinguishing mark of attention and what is the distinguishing mark of wisdom?"

"Examination is the distinguishing mark of attention and cutting off is the distinguishing mark of wisdom."

"How is this so? Make a simile."

"Do you know about barley-reapers, sire?"

"Yes, revered sir, I do."

"How, sire, do barley-reapers reap barley?"

"Revered sir, grasping a handful of barley in the left hand and a sickle in the right, they cut it off with the sickle."

"Even so, sire, does one who is devoted to mental training take hold of the mind with attention and cut off the defilements with wisdom."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

7. The Mark of Morality (I,9)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, when you said: 'And because of other wholesome mental states'—which are these wholesome mental states?"[32]

"Sire, they are morality, faith, energy, mindfulness, and concentration."

"Revered sir, what is the distinguishing mark of morality?"

"The distinguishing mark of morality, sire, is that it is the basis of all wholesome mental states, namely, the (five) spiritual faculties, the (five) powers, the (seven) factors of enlightenment, the (eightfold) path, the (four) foundations of mindfulness, the (four) right efforts, the (four) bases of psychic power, the (four) jhānas, the (eight) deliverances and concentration. In one who has morality, sire, none of these wholesome mental states decreases."[33]

"Make a simile."

"As, sire, whatever vegetable life and animal life come to growth, increase and maturity, all do so by being dependent on the earth; even so do all these wholesome mental states develop by being dependent on morality."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

32. This refers back to §5.

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8. The Mark of Faith (I,10)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of faith?"

"Faith, sire, has tranquillizing as a distinguishing mark and also leaping forward as a distinguishing mark."

"Revered Nāgasena, how is tranquillizing a distinguishing mark of faith?"

"When faith is arising, sire, it extirpates the hindrances;[34] when the mind is without the hindrances it is clear, pure and serene. Thus it is, sire, that tranquillizing is a distinguishing mark of faith."

"Make a simile."

"As, sire, a Wheel-turning King[35] going along a high road with his four limbed-army of elephants, horses, chariots and infantry, might cross a small stretch of water and, as a result, that water will become foul, turbid and muddy. Yet the king would ask his men to bring him some drinking water. The king might have a water-clearing gem. So the men cast that water-clearing gem in the water. Immediately the various water plants disappear, the mud subsides and the water becomes clear, pure and serene. Then the men offer the drinking water to the king. Sire,

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33. The five spiritual faculties (*indriya*) are: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. The five powers (*bala*) are the same factors as the spiritual faculties, elevated to the status of invincibility. The seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) are: mindfulness, investigation of phenomena, energy, rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity. The four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) are: mindful contemplation of the body, feelings, states of mind, and mental objects. The four right efforts (*sammappadhāna*) are: the effort to prevent unarisen unwholesome mental states from arising; the effort to eliminate arisen unwholesome states; the effort to arouse unarisen wholesome states; the effort to develop fully arisen wholesome states. The four bases of psychic power (*iddhipāda*) are: concentration due to intention, concentration due to energy, concentration due to consciousness, and concentration due to investigation, each conjoined with the activity of striving. The four jhānas or meditative absorptions are frequently enumerated in the Suttas. On the eight deliverances (*vimokkha*), see D II 70–71.
34. The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), the main obstacles to meditative development, are: sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt.

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like the water is the mind, like those people is the earnest student of mental training, like the water plants and the mud are the hindrances, like the water-clearing gem is faith. Just as the water plants disappear and the mud subsides as soon as the water-clearing gem is thrown in the water and the water becomes clear, pure and serene, even so, sire, faith, as it is uprising, extirpates the hindrances and the mind that is free from the hindrances is pure, clean and serene. It is thus, sire, that tranquillizing is a distinguishing mark of faith."

"How, revered sir, is leaping forward a distinguishing mark of faith?"

"As, sire, one who is devoted to mental training, on seeing that the minds of others are freed, leaps forward after the fruit of stream-entry or the fruit of once-returning or the fruit of non-returning or after arahatship and performs mental training for the attainment of the unattained, for mastery of the unmastered and for realization of the unrealized, even so, sire, is leaping forward a distinguishing mark of faith."

"Make a simile."

"Suppose, sire, as a result of heavy rain a river would swell overflowing both banks. Then a great crowd of people were to come but, not knowing either the width or depth of that river, might stand terrified and hesitant on the bank. Then a strong man comes along. He knows his own power and strength. He ties on his loin-cloth tightly and, leaping into the water, crosses over. On seeing that he had crossed over the great crowd of people too would cross over. Even so, sire, one who is devoted to mental training, on seeing that the minds of others are freed, leaps forward after the fruit of stream-entry or the fruit of once-returning or the fruit of non-returning or after arahatship and performs mental training for the attainment of the unattained, for mastery of the unmastered and for realization of the unrealized. It is thus, sire, that leaping forward is a distinguishing mark of faith."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

35. The Wheel-turning King (*cakkavatti-rājā*) is the benevolent universal monarch of Buddhist legend, who unites the world under the reign of righteousness. See D III 58–63; M III 172–77.

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9. The Mark of Energy (I,11)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of energy?"

"Rendering of support, sire, is the distinguishing mark of energy. No wholesome mental state that is supported by energy decreases."

"Make a simile."

"Sire, suppose a house were falling down and a man supported it with more wood so that, supported thus, that house did not fall down—even so, sire, is rendering support the distinguishing mark of energy; no wholesome mental state that is supported by energy decreases."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

10. The Mark of Mindfulness (I,12)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of mindfulness?"

"Not-drifting, sire, is a distinguishing mark of mindfulness and also taking up is a distinguishing mark of mindfulness."

"Revered sir, how is not-drifting a distinguishing mark of mindfulness?"

"When mindfulness is uprising, sire, one does not drift in regard to mental states that are wholesome and unwholesome, blamable and blameless, low and lofty, dark and bright or evenly mixed, but thinking: 'These are the four foundations of mindfulness, these the four right efforts, these the four bases of psychic power, these the five spiritual faculties, these the five powers, these the seven factors of enlightenment, this the Noble Eightfold Path, this is calm, this is insight, this is knowledge, this is emancipation, the one who is devoted to mental training then follows the things that should be followed and does not follow the things that should not be followed, he associates with that which should be associated with and does not associate with that which should not be associated with. It is thus, sire, that not-drifting is a distinguishing mark of mindfulness."

"Make a simile"

"As, sire, the store-keeper of a Wheel-turning King reminds him of his glory every morning and evening, saying: 'You have so many elephants, your majesty, so many horses, so many chariots, so many foot-soldiers, so much unwrought gold, so

much wrought gold, so much wealth; let his majesty remember it,' and does not drift in regard to the king's wealth. Even so, sire, when mindfulness is uprising one does not drift in regard to mental states that are wholesome and unwholesome, blamable and blameless ... the one who is devoted to mental training then follows the things that should be followed and does not follow the things that should not be followed, he associates with that which should be associated with and does not associate with that which should not be associated with. It is thus, sire, that not-drifting is a distinguishing mark of mindfulness."

"Revered sir, how is taking-up a distinguishing mark of mindfulness?"

"Sire, when mindfulness is uprising one examines the qualities of mental states that are beneficial and detrimental, and thinking: 'These mental states are beneficial, these mental states are detrimental, these mental states are helpful, these mental states are not helpful,' the one who is devoted to mental training removes the detrimental mental states and takes up the beneficial mental states, he removes the unhelpful mental states and takes up the helpful mental states. It is thus, sire, that taking-up is a distinguishing mark of mindfulness."

"Make a simile."

"As, sire, the adviser-treasurer of a Wheel-turning King knows what is beneficial and what is detrimental for the king and thinks: 'These are beneficial for the king, these are detrimental, these are helpful, these are unhelpful,' and then removes what is detrimental and takes up what is beneficial, removes what is unhelpful and takes up what is helpful, even so, sire, when mindfulness is uprising one examines the qualities of mental states that are beneficial and detrimental ... and takes up helpful mental states. It is thus, sire, that taking up is a distinguishing mark of mindfulness. And this, sire, was said by the Blessed One: 'And I, monks, say that mindfulness is of value in everything.'"

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

11. The Mark of Concentration (I,13)

King Milinda said; "Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of concentration?"

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"The distinguishing mark of concentration, sire, is being the chief. All those mental states that are wholesome have concentration as the chief, they lean, tend and incline towards concentration."

"Make a simile."

"As, sire, in a house with a ridge-pole all the rafters go to the ridge-pole, lean towards it and join it, and the ridge-pole is pointed to as their chief, even so, sire, all those mental states that are wholesome have concentration as the chief, they lean, tend and incline towards concentration."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

12. The Mark of Wisdom (I,14)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of wisdom?"

"Earlier I said, sire, that cutting off is a distinguishing mark of wisdom.[36] But illuminating is also a distinguishing mark of wisdom."

"How, revered sir, is illuminating a distinguishing mark of wisdom?"

"Sire, when wisdom is uprising it dispels the darkness of ignorance, produces the effulgence of clear knowledge, makes the light of knowing appear, and makes plain the Four Noble Truths. In consequence, one who is devoted to mental training sees what is impermanent, or what is suffering, or what is not-self by means of right wisdom."

"Make a simile."

"As, sire, a man might bring a lamp into a dark house and when he has put it down the lamp dispels the darkness, produces effulgence, makes light appear and makes plain the forms of things—even so, sire, when wisdom is uprising it dispels the darkness of ignorance, produces the effulgence of clear knowledge, makes the light of knowing appear, and makes plain the Four Noble Truths. In consequence, one who is devoted to mental training sees what is impermanent, or what is suffering, or what is not-self by means of right wisdom. It is thus, sire, that illuminating is a distinguishing mark of wisdom."

36. See §6 above.

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13. Neither the Same nor Another (II,1)

King Milinda said; "Revered Nāgasena, is he who uprises the same or is he another?"

"Neither the same nor another.[37] What do you think about this, sire? Now that you are grown up are you the same as you were when you were a boy, young, tender, lying on your back?"

"No, revered sir. That boy, young, tender, lying on his back was one thing. I, who am now full-grown, am another."

"That being so, sire, you can have no mother, nor can you have a father, nor can you have a teacher, nor can you be master of a craft, nor can you be one of morality, nor can you be one of wisdom. Can it be, sire, that the mother of the embryo at the first stage in prenatal development is different from the mother at the second stage and she different from the mother at the third stage and she different from the mother at the fourth stage? That the mother of the small (creature) is one thing and the mother of the full-grown (creature) another? That one trains in a craft and another becomes trained? That one does an evil deed and they cut off the hands and feet of another?"

"No, revered sir. But what would you say, revered sir, when it is spoken thus?"

"It is one 'I' that was the boy, young, tender, lying on his back and it is the same 'I' that am now full-grown, and all these are held together as a unity in dependence on this body itself."

"Make a simile."

"It is as if, sire, some person might light a lamp. Would it burn all night long?"

"Yes, revered sir, it might burn all night long."

"Is the flame of the first watch of the night the same as the flame of the middle watch?"

"No, revered sir."

"Is the flame of the middle watch the same as the flame of the third watch?"

"No, revered sir."

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37. *Na ca so na ca añño.* This famous dictum has become the definitive Theravāda solution to the problem of reconciling the doctrine of non-self with the continuity of personal identity. For an interesting discussion, see Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 177–85.

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"Is it then, sire, that the lamp in the first watch was one thing, the lamp in the middle watch another, and the lamp in the third watch still another?"

"No, revered sir, it was burning all through the night in dependence on itself."

"Even so, sire, a continuity of phenomena is linked together.[38] It uprises as one and ceases as another, linked together as though there were no before and no after. Hence it is neither the same nor another, but the subsequent consciousness is reckoned (together with) the preceding consciousness."[39]

"Make a further simile."

"As, sire, milk on being taken from a cow would turn after a time into curds and from curds into butter and from butter into ghee, so, sire, would one be speaking rightly if one were to speak thus: 'That milk is precisely those curds, it is precisely that butter, it is precisely that ghee'?"

"No, sire, they come into being because of it."

"Even so, sire, a continuity of phenomena is linked together. It uprises as one and ceases as another, linked together as though there were no before and no after. Hence it is neither the same nor another, but the subsequent consciousness is reckoned (together with) the preceding consciousness."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

14. Knowing the End of Rebirth (II,2)

King Milinda said: "Does he who does not take rebirth know: 'I will not take rebirth'?"

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38. The continuity of phenomena (*dhammasantati*) refers to the quickly changing succession of the five aggregates, a process in which the phenomena at any given moment condition those at the next moment. It is the rapidity with which these phenomena, discrete at every moment, rise and pass away that gives the illusion of a persisting personal identity. Horner, in her translation, seems to have mistaken *sandahati*, "to be linked together," for *sandhāvati*, "to run on."

39. The phrase "neither the same nor another" refers back to Nāgasena's answer to Milinda's original question which opens this section. The reading of the last sentence follows the Burmese-script edition: *tena na ca so na ca añño, purimaviññāṇe pacchima-viññāṇaṃ saṅgahaṃ gacchati.* The translation of this line follows the gloss of Mil-a.

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"Yes, sire. He who does not take rebirth knows that he will not take rebirth."

"How does he know, revered sir?"

"It is from the termination of whatever is the cause, whatever is the condition of rebirth that he knows he will not take rebirth."

"Make a simile."

"As, sire, an agriculturist, a householder, when he had ploughed and sown, would fill his granary; but if, after a time, he should neither plough nor sow but should use his stored-up grain or should dispose of it or deal with it according to circumstances, then, sire, would that agriculturist, the householder, know that his granary would not be filled?"

"Yes, revered sir, he would know."

"How would he know?"

"It is from the termination of whatever is the cause, whatever is the condition of filling the granary that he would know: 'My granary will not be filled.'"

"Even so, sire, it is from the termination of whatever is the cause, whatever is the condition of rebirth that he knows he will not take rebirth."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

15. Knowledge and Wisdom (II,3)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, has wisdom arisen in him in whom knowledge has arisen?"[40]

"Yes, sire, wisdom has arisen in him in whom knowledge has arisen."

"What, revered sir, is knowledge the same as wisdom?"

"Yes, sire, knowledge is the same as wisdom."

"But, revered sir, would he in whom knowledge, which is the same as wisdom, has arisen be bewildered or would he not be bewildered?"

"He would be bewildered at some things, sire, at some he would not be bewildered."

"Where would he be bewildered, revered sir, where not?"

"He would be bewildered, sire, in regard to those parts of the crafts that he did not already know, or in regard to those districts he had not already visited, or in regard to those names and designations he had not already heard."

40. Knowledge is *ñāṇa*, wisdom is *paññā*.

"Where would he not be bewildered, revered sir?"

"In regard to that done through this wisdom, sire, namely, (the comprehension of) impermanence or suffering or not-self; here he would not be bewildered."

"But where, revered sir, does his delusion go?"

"Delusion, sire, ceases the very moment knowledge arises."

"Make a simile."

"It is as if, sire, some person might bring a lamp into a house. In consequence the darkness would cease and light appear. Even so, sire, delusion ceases the very moment knowledge arises."

"But where does wisdom go, revered sir?"

"Although wisdom, sire, ceases then and there when it has done its task, yet that which is done by means of this wisdom, namely, (the comprehension of) impermanence or suffering or not-self, that does not cease."

"Make a simile."

"Sire, it is like a man who wants to send a letter during the night. After he has summoned a scribe and brought a lamp he makes him write the letter. But if he has the lamp put out after the letter has been written, the letter would not be lost because the lamp was put out. Even so, sire, though wisdom ceases as soon as it has done its task, yet that which is done by means of this wisdom, namely, (the comprehension of) impermanence or suffering or not-self, that does not cease."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

16. The Feelings of an Arahat (II,4)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, does he who does not take rebirth feel any painful feeling?"

"He feels some, some he does not feel."

"What does he feel, what does he not feel?"

"He feels bodily feelings, sire, he does not feel mental feelings."

"Why is it so, sire?"

"It is from the non-termination of the cause and condition for the uprising of a painful bodily feeling that he feels a painful bodily feeling; but it is from the termination of the cause and condition for the uprising of a painful mental feeling that he feels no painful mental feeling. And this, sire, was said by the Blessed One: 'He feels one feeling: the bodily, not the mental.'"[41]

"Revered Nāgasena, why does he who does not feel a painful feeling not attain complete Nibbāna?"[42]

"Sire, arahats have neither approval nor repugnance; nor do arahats destroy what is unripe; wise men wait for full maturing. And this, sire, was spoken by the Elder Sāriputta, the General of the Dhamma:[43]

> I delight not in dying, I delight not in living,
> But I wait for the time, as a hireling his wages.
> I delight not in dying, I delight not in living,
> But I wait for the time, clearly conscious and mindful."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

17. The Quality of Feelings (II,5)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, are pleasant feelings wholesome or unwholesome or indeterminate?"

"They may be wholesome, sire, they may be unwholesome, they may be indeterminate."

"If, revered sir, wholesome feelings are not painful, if painful feelings are not wholesome, to say: 'That which is wholesome is painful' is not acceptable."

"What do you think about this, sire? If one should place a red-hot ball of iron in a man's hand and in his other hand should place an ice-cold lump of snow, would these both hurt him, sire?"

"Yes, revered sir, both would hurt him."

"Is this, sire, because both are hot?"

"No, revered sir."

"Is it then that both are cold, sire?"

"No, revered sir."

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41. The "cause and condition" for the uprising of painful bodily feeling is the body; thus even an arahat is subject to painful bodily feeling. The "cause and condition" for the uprising of painful mental feeling is aversion (*paṭigha*). Since the arahat has eradicated aversion he no longer experiences painful mental feeling. The statement of the Buddha comes at S IV 209.
42. Nāgasena's reply indicates that the king is really asking why arahats do not hasten their attainment of final Nibbāna by committing suicide.
43. These verses occur at Th 1002–3, though in inverted order and with a difference in reading.

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"Acknowledge your refutation. If what is red-hot hurts, but if both of them are not hot, the pain does not arise from that; if what is cold hurts, but if both of them are not cold, the pain does not arise from that. So how is it, sire, that both of them hurt since both of them are not hot and both of them are not cold? And how is it that, though the one is hot and the other is cold, one says: 'Both of them hurt,' yet the pain does not arise from that?"

"I am not competent to converse on this assertion with you. It were good, revered sir, if you explained the meaning."

"Sire, there are six types of happiness connected with the world, six types of happiness connected with renunciation, six types of sorrow connected with the world, six types of sorrow connected with renunciation, six types of equanimity connected with the world, and six types of equanimity connected with renunciation. There are these six sets of six. So there is a thirty-sixfold feeling that is past, a thirty-sixfold feeling that is future and a thirty-sixfold feeling that is present; so assembling them and bringing them together there are one hundred and eight modes of feeling."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

18. Who Takes Rebirth? (II,6)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, who takes rebirth?"

"Mind-and-matter,[44] sire, takes rebirth."

"What, is it this same mind-and-matter itself that takes rebirth?"

"This same mind-and-matter does not itself take rebirth, sire; but, sire, by means of this mind-and-matter one does a good or bad deed and, because of this deed, another mind-and-matter takes rebirth."

"If, revered sir, this mind-and-matter itself does not take rebirth would one not be freed from evil deeds?"

"If, sire, it did not take rebirth one would be freed from evil deeds. But because, sire, it takes rebirth one is not freed from evil deeds."

"Make a simile."

"Suppose, sire, some man were to steal another man's mangoes and the owner of the mangoes were to seize him and bring

44. *Nāmarūpa*. The two terms that enter into this compound will be analysed at §19.

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him before the king, saying, 'Your majesty, my mangoes were stolen by this man,' and he were to say, 'Your majesty, I did not steal his mangoes; the mangoes he planted were different from these that I stole; I do not deserve punishment.' Would he, sire, not deserve punishment?"

"Yes, revered sir, he would deserve punishment."

"For what reason?"

"Whatever he may say, the mangoes he stole resulted from the mangoes which, he admits, the other man planted."

"Even so, sire, by means of this mind-and-matter one does a good or bad deed and, because of this deed, another mind-and-matter takes rebirth; therefore, one is not freed from evil deeds."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

19. Mind and Matter (II,8)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, regarding mind-and-matter, which is mind and which is matter?"

"That which is gross, sire, is matter and those subtle mental states form mind."[45]

"What is the reason, revered sir, that mind does not take rebirth alone, nor matter alone?"

"These things, sire, are dependent the one upon the other; they simply arise together."

"Make a simile."

"As, sire, there could not be just a yolk or just an egg-shell from a hen, since both the yolk and the egg-shell are dependent the one upon the other and there is no separate arising of these two, even so, sire, if there were not mind there would be no matter, for that which is mind and that which is matter are both dependent the one upon the other and there is no separate arising of these two. Thus is produced this long time."[46]

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

45. The subtle mental states (*sukhumā cittacetasikā dhammā*) are feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness; the former three are grouped together as mental factors (*cetasika*), the last is identical with mind (*citta*). This use of the terms *citta* and *cetasika* is typical of the Abhidhamma literature.

46. The "long time" is saṃsāra, the cycle of rebirths, which in technical terms is the unbroken chain of the mind-and-matter combination.

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20. What is Time? (II,9)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, as to this 'long time' you mentioned, what is this time?"

"The past time, sire, the future time and the present time."

"But does this time exist, revered sir?"

"Some time exists, sire, some does not."

"But which exists, revered sir, which does not?"

"Those formations, sire, that are past, departed, stopped or changed—that time does not exist. Those mental states that are results and those mental states that are liable to have results and those giving rebirth elsewhere—that time exists.[47] For those beings who die and arise elsewhere time exists; for those beings who die and do not arise elsewhere time does not exist; for those beings who have attained final Nibbāna time does not exist."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

21. The Root of Time (III,1)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the root of past time, future time and present time?"

"The root of past time, future time and present time, sire, is ignorance. Conditioned by ignorance are kammic formations, conditioned by kammic formations is consciousness, conditioned by consciousness is mind-and-matter, conditioned by mind-and-matter are the six sense bases, conditioned by the six sense bases is contact, conditioned by contact is feeling, conditioned by feeling is craving, conditioned by craving is clinging, conditioned by clinging is becoming, conditioned by

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47. Mil-a says that the mention of resultant mental states implies as well matter produced by kamma. The mental states that are liable to have results are the wholesome and unwholesome states of the three planes of existence. It should be noted that the distinction Nāgasena draws between time that exists and time that does not exist seems to run counter to the basic tenet of the Sarvāstivāda school: that the dhammas continue to exist through all three periods of time—past, present and future—becoming manifest only in the present while subsisting in the past and future. This tenet gave the school its name (*sarvam asti* = all exists). This passage seems to rule out the *Milinda* as a doctrinal disquisition of the Sarvāstivādins, though it does not exclude the possibility that the work originated among non-sectarian members of this school.

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becoming is birth, conditioned by birth there come into existence old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.[48] Thus the earliest point of this whole time cannot be shown."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

22. The Chicken and the Egg (III,2)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, as to that which you mentioned—'the earliest point cannot be shown'—make a simile for that."

"As, sire, an egg comes from a hen and a hen from an egg and an egg from a hen—is there thus an end of this series?"

"There is not, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, the earliest point of time cannot be shown either."

"Make a further simile"

Venerable Nāgasena traced a circle on the ground and asked King Milinda: "Is there an end to this circle, sire?"

"There is not, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, are those circles spoken of by the Blessed One: 'Eye-consciousness arises because of eye and visible forms; the meeting of the three is contact; conditioned by contact is feeling; conditioned by feeling is craving; conditioned by craving is kamma and eye is born again from kamma.'[49] Is there thus an end of this series?"

"There is not, revered sir."

"And, sire, the same applies to ear-consciousness, ear and sounds; nose-consciousness, nose and smells; tongue-consciousness, tongue and tastes; body-consciousness, body and touch; mind-consciousness arises because of mind and mental

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48. This is the chain of dependent origination; the formula is common in the Nikāyas.
49. The last phrase ("conditioned by craving is kamma ...") is not found as such in the Nikāyas, where the formula continues as in §21 above. The statement "conditioned by craving is kamma" (*taṇhāpaccayā kammaṃ*) may be based on the identification of *bhava*, existence, with *kamma-bhava*, action-existence, explained as kamma leading to new existence in the commentarial texts (see Vism XVII,250–52, referring to Vibh 137). The statement "eye is born again from kamma" may refer to the Buddha's utterance that the eye (and the ear, etc.) is old kamma (see S IV 132).

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objects; the meeting of the three is contact; conditioned by contact is feeling; conditioned by feeling is craving; conditioned by craving is kamma and mind is born again from kamma. Is there thus an end of this series?"

"There is not, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, the earliest point of time cannot be shown either."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

23. Formations and Becoming (III,5)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, are there any formations that are produced without a becoming?"

"Sire, there are no formations that are produced without a becoming."

"Make a simile."

"What do you think about this, sire? Was this house where you are sitting produced without a becoming?"

"There is nothing here, revered sir, that has been produced without a becoming. These pieces of wood were in the forest and the clay was in the ground, and it is through proper effort on the part of women and men that this house is existing."

"Even so, sire, there are no formations that are produced without a becoming."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

24. No Experiencer is Found (III, vi)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, is there such a thing as an experiencer?"[50]

"What does this 'experiencer' mean, sire?"

"A soul within that sees a visible form with the eye, hears a sound with the ear, smells a smell with the nose, tastes a taste with the tongue, feels a touch with the body and discriminates mental states with the mind. Just as we who are sitting here in the palace can look out of any window we want to look out of, even so, revered sir, this soul within can look out of any door it wants to look out of."

50. *Vedagū*. The word, which might also be rendered as "the one who knows," is a surrogate for self. The synonymous "soul within" (*abbhantare jīvo*) makes it clear that a permanent subject of experience is intended.

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"I will talk to you, sire, about the five doors.[51] Listen and attend carefully. If the soul within sees a visible form through the eye just as we who are sitting here in the palace can look out of any window we want to look out of, can it not then see a visible form not only through the eye but also through the ear, nose, tongue, body and mind? Likewise, can it not hear a sound, smell a smell, taste a taste, feel a touch and discriminate mental states through each of the other five doors besides the one you have specified in each case?"

"No, revered sir."

"Again, sire, we who are sitting here in the palace will see visible forms out there before us more clearly in the great space if these network windows are removed. Thus too, would this soul within see visible forms more clearly when the doors of the eyes are removed? And if the ears were removed, the nose removed, the tongue removed, the body removed, would it hear a sound, smell a smell, taste a taste and feel a touch more clearly on account of the great space?"

"No, revered sir."

"Again, sire, suppose this Dinna had gone out and were standing out on the porch outside the gateway. Would you know, sire, that he had done so?"

"Yes, I would know, revered sir."

"Suppose, sire, Dinna were to come in again and stand in front of you. Would you know that he had done so?"

"Yes, I would know, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, if a tasty object had been put on the tongue, would the soul within know whether it were acidic or salty or bitter or sharp or astringent or sweet?"

"Yes, revered sir, it would know."

"But when the tasty object had passed into the stomach would it know whether it had been acidic or salty or bitter or sharp or astringent or sweet?"

"No, revered sir. I am not competent to discuss this with you. Please explain."

"Because, sire, of the eye and visible form eye-consciousness arises. Co-nascent with that are contact, feeling, perception, volition, one-pointedness, psychic life and attention.[52] Thus these things are produced from a condition and there is no experiencer found here. The same applies to the ear and sound, nose and smell, tongue and taste, body and touch,

51. Though five doors are mentioned there is reference to six doors.

and mind and mental states. These are things produced from a condition and there is no experiencer found here."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

25. Seeing and Thinking (III,7)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, where eye-consciousness arises, does mind-consciousness also arise there?"

"Yes, sire, mind-consciousness also arises there."[53]

"Now, revered Nāgasena, does eye-consciousness arise first and mind-consciousness later, or does mind-consciousness arise first and eye-consciousness later?"

"Eye-consciousness arises first, sire, mind-consciousness later."

"Now, revered sir, does eye-consciousness instruct mind-consciousness, saying 'Where I arise do you likewise arise,' or does mind-consciousness instruct eye-consciousness, saying 'Where you arise I will likewise arise'?"

"No, sire, there is no conversation between them."

"Then how is it, revered Nāgasena, that where eye-consciousness arises there mind-consciousness also arises?"

"It is because of tendency, sire, because of door, because of habit and because of practice."

"Make a simile."

"When it is raining by what means may the water run away?"

"It might run away by means of some slope."

"But, sire, if it continued to rain, by what means would that later amount of water run away?"

"It would take the same course as the earlier water."

"Then, sire, does the earlier water instruct the later, saying 'You run away by the same course as I do,' or does the later water instruct the earlier, saying 'I will also run away by the same course as you will take'?"

"No, revered sir, there is no conversation between them; they run away because there is a slope."

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52. These seven mental factors are called, in the Abhidhamma, "universals" (*sabbacittasādhāraṇa*) because they are common to every state of consciousness.

53. Eye-consciousness has the function of simply seeing a visible form, mind-consciousness conceptualizes and discriminates the form. The same relationship holds between mind-consciousness and the other senses.

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"Even so, sire, it is because of tendency that where eye-consciousness arises, mind-consciousness arises there too."

"How is it, revered sir, that because of door mind-consciousness also arises where eye-consciousness arises? Make a simile."

"A king's border-town has strong ramparts and only one gateway. If a man wanted to leave that town how would he do so?"

"Through that gateway, revered sir."

"If another man wanted to leave that town how would he do so?"

"In the same way as the first man, revered sir."

"Does the first man instruct the second, saying 'You go out in the same way as I do,' or does the second man instruct the first, saying 'I too will go out in the same way as you do'?"

"No, revered sir, there is no conversation between them. They go out because there is the door."

"Even so, sire, it is because of door that where eye-consciousness arises mind-consciousness arises there too."

"How is it, revered sir, that because of habit mind-consciousness also arises where eye-consciousness arises? Make a simile."

"If one cart went ahead, then which way would the second cart go?"

"By the same way as the first cart, revered sir."

"Does the first cart instruct the second, saying 'You go by the same way as I go,' or does the second cart instruct the first, saying 'I too will go by the same way as you do'?"

"No, revered sir, there is no conversation between them. They go because of habit."

"Even so, sire, it is because of habit that where eye-consciousness arises mind-consciousness arises there too."

"How is it, revered sir, that because of practice mind-consciousness also arises where eye-consciousness arises? Make a simile."

"As, sire, a beginner is clumsy in the crafts of reckoning on the fingers, calculation, reckoning and writing, but after a time by practice in careful working he becomes deft, even so, sire, it is through practice that where eye-consciousness arises there too mind-consciousness arises. There is no conversation between them. They arise because of practice."

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"Revered Nāgasena, does mind-consciousness arise likewise where ear-consciousness arises? ... Does mind-consciousness arise where nose-consciousness ... tongue-consciousness ... body-consciousness arises?"

"Yes, sire. Where body-consciousness arises, mind-consciousness also arises."

"Now, revered sir, does body-consciousness arise first and mind-consciousness later, or does mind-consciousness arise first and body-consciousness later?"

"Body-consciousness arises first, sire, mind-consciousness later."

"Now, revered Nāgasena ..."

"... there is no conversation between them. They arise because of practice."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

26. The Mark of Contact (III,8)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena does feeling arise where mind-consciousness arises?"

"Yes, sire, where mind-consciousness arises there contact arises, feeling arises, perception arises, volition arises, applied thought arises and sustained thought arises, and all mental states that arise there are headed by contact."

"Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of contact?"

"Touching, sire, is the distinguishing mark of contact."

"Make a simile."

"Suppose, sire, two hands are clapped together. One of these hands should be understood as the eye, the other as visible form, the meeting of the two as contact."[54]

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

27. The Mark of Feeling (III,9)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of feeling?"

"Sire, being felt is a distinguishing mark of feeling, and experiencing is a distinguishing mark."

"Make a simile."

54. In the Nikāyas contact is explained as the coming together of three things, as at §24 above (see e.g. M I 111). Here it seems that fidelity to the simile has led to the jettisoning of consciousness.

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"Suppose, sire, some man should render a king a service and that king, being delighted, should repay the service and that, because of this, the man should go about possessed of and provided with the five strands of sense pleasures,[55] and that it should occur to him: 'Earlier I rendered the king a service and the king, delighted, repaid the service of mine so that I am now experiencing such and such feelings.' Even so, sire, being felt is a distinguishing mark of feeling, and experiencing is a distinguishing mark."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

28. The Mark of Perception (III,10)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of perception?"

"Perceiving, sire, is the distinguishing mark of perception. What does one perceive? One perceives blue, and one perceives yellow, and one perceives red, and one perceives white, and one perceives crimson."

"Make a simile."

"As, sire, when a king's store-keeper has gone into the store-room and seen the things that are the property of the king, he perceives that they are blue, yellow, red, white and crimson. Even so, sire, is perceiving the distinguishing mark of perception."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

29. The Mark of Volition (III,11)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of volition?"

"Being willed, sire, is a distinguishing mark of volition and effective preparation is also a distinguishing mark."

"Make a simile."

"Suppose, sire, some man has prepared poison and were to drink it himself or make others drink it—either he or the others would become afflicted. Even so, sire, some man here, having through volition willed an unwholesome deed, would arise, after death, in a bad bourn, and those who follow his example also arise, after death, in a bad bourn. Even so, sire,

55. The five strands of sense pleasures (*pañca kāmaguṇa*) are delightful forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tangibles.

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is being willed a distinguishing mark of volition and effective preparation a distinguishing mark."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

30. The Mark of Consciousness (III,12)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of consciousness?"

"The distinguishing mark of consciousness, sire, is cognizing."

"Make a simile."

"As, sire, the superintendent of a city, sitting at the cross-roads in the middle of the city, could see a man coming from the eastern, southern, western or northern quarters, even so, sire, whatever form a man sees, he cognizes it by consciousness, and whatever sound he hears, whatever smell he smells, whatever taste he tastes, whatever touch he feels and whatever mental state he cognizes, he cognizes it by consciousness. Even so, sire, is cognizing a distinguishing mark of consciousness."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

31. The Mark of Applied Thought (III,13)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of applied thought?"

"Fixing (the mind), sire, is the distinguishing mark of applied thought."[56]"Make a simile."

"As, sire, a carpenter fixes a well-turned piece of wood in a socket, even so, sire, is fixing (the mind) the distinguishing mark of applied thought."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

32. The Mark of Sustained Thought (III,14)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the distinguishing mark of sustained thought?"

"Constantly pondering, sire, is the distinguishing mark of sustained thought."

"Make a simile."

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56. Fixing (*appanā*), the distinguishing mark of applied thought (*vitakka*), comes to acquire, in the Commentaries, the meaning of absorption. The term is used in reference to the jhānas.

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"As, sire, a bronze gong that has been struck reverberates afterwards and the sound lingers on, even so, sire, applied thought is to be understood thus as 'striking' and sustained thought is to be understood thus as 'reverberating.'"

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

33. Telling the Difference (III,15)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, is it possible, having again and again analysed these mental states the nature of which it is to arise together, to point to a difference between them, saying: 'This is contact, this is feeling, this perception, this volition, this consciousness, this applied thought, this sustained thought'?"

"It is not possible, sire."

"Make a simile."

"Suppose, sire, a king's cook were to make a soup or a sauce and were to throw into it curds, salt, ginger, cumin-seed, black pepper, and other ingredients, and suppose the king should speak thus to him: 'Bring me a sauce of curds, bring me a salt sauce, bring me a ginger sauce, bring me a cumin-seed sauce, bring me a black-pepper sauce, bring me a sauce into which everything has been thrown'—now, is it possible, sire, having again and again analysed these sauces the nature of which it is to arise together, to bring forward a sauce and speak of its acidity or saltiness or bitterness or sharpness or astringency or sweetness?"

"It is not possible to do so, sire, though all these tastes are present each with its own distinguishing mark."

"Even so, sire, it is not possible having again and again analysed these mental states the nature of which it is to arise together, to point to a difference between them, saying: 'This is contact, this is feeling, this perception, this volition, this consciousness, this applied thought and this sustained thought,' though all are present each with its own distinguishing mark."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

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PART III

Questions for the Cutting Off of Perplexity

1. The Sense Bases and Kamma (IV,1)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, are these five sense bases[57] produced from different kammas or from one kamma?"

"They are produced from different kammas, sire, not from one kamma."

"Make a simile."

"What do you think of this, sire? If five kinds of seed were sown in one field, would different fruits be produced from these different seeds?"

"Yes, revered sir, they would be so produced."

"Even so, sire, these five sense bases are produced from different kammas, not from one kamma."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

2. Why are People Different? (IV,2)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the reason that people are not all the same, some being short-lived, some long-lived, some weakly, others healthy, some ugly, some beautiful, some of few wishes, others of many wishes, some poor, others rich, some belonging to low families, others to high families, and some being weak in wisdom, others having wisdom?"

"But why, sire, are trees not all the same, some being acidic, some salty, some bitter, some sharp, some astringent, others sweet?"

"I think, revered sir, that is because of a difference in seeds."

"Even so, sire, it is because of a difference in kamma that people are not all the same, some being short-lived, others long-lived, some weakly, others healthy, some ugly, others beautiful, some of few wishes, others of many wishes, some poor, others rich, some belonging to low families, others to

57. *Āyatana*: the five sense faculties are intended, eye, ear, nose, tongue and body.

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high families, and some being weak in wisdom, others having wisdom. And this, sire, was also said by the Blessed One: 'Young man, beings are owners of their own kamma, they are heirs to their kamma, kamma is the womb from which they are born, their kamma is their friend, kamma is their refuge, kamma divides beings, that is to say into low and lofty' (M III 203)."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

3. Previous Effort and Present Endeavour (IV,3)

King Milinda said: "You told me, revered sir, that the purpose of your going forth was so that this suffering might cease and another suffering might not arise."

"Yes, that is so."

"Was it because there had been previous effort? Should one not endeavour at the present time?"

"Present endeavour is concerned with what still remains to be done. Previous effort has accomplished what it had to do."

"Make a simile."

"What do you think of this, sire? If you were to become thirsty, would you then have a well dug and say, 'I will drink water'?"

"No, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, present endeavour is concerned with what still remains to be done. Previous effort has accomplished what it had to do."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

4. Cessation is Nibbāna (IV,6)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, is cessation Nibbāna?"

"Yes, sire, cessation is Nibbāna."

"How, revered sir, is cessation Nibbāna?"

"All those foolish worldlings, sire, who rejoice in the inner and outer sense bases, approve of them and cleave to them, are carried away by that stream; they are not utterly free from birth, old age and death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair; they are not, I say, utterly free from suffering. But, sire, the instructed noble disciple does not rejoice in the inner and outer sense bases, does not approve of them or cleave to them. For him, not rejoicing in them, not approving of them or cleaving to them, craving ceases; from the cessation of

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craving is the cessation of clinging; from the cessation of clinging is the cessation of becoming; from the cessation of becoming is the cessation of birth; from the cessation of birth, old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease. Thus is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. In this way, sire, cessation is Nibbāna."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

5. Does Everyone obtain Nibbāna? (IV,7)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, does everyone obtain Nibbāna?"

"Not everyone, sire, obtains Nibbāna, but he obtains Nibbāna who, practising rightly, knows directly the things that should be directly known, comprehends the things that should be comprehended, abandons the things that should be abandoned, develops the things that should be developed, and realizes the things that should be realized."[58]

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

6. Knowing Nibbāna is Happiness (IV,8)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, does he who does not obtain Nibbāna know that Nibbāna is happiness."

"Yes, sire, he does."

"But how, revered Nāgasena, does anyone without obtaining Nibbāna know that Nibbāna is happiness?"

"What do you think about this, sire? Would those who have not had their hands and feet cut off know that the cutting off of them is suffering?"

"Yes, revered sir, they would know."

"How would they know?"

"They know, revered sir, from having heard the lamentations of those whose hands and feet have been cut off that the cutting off of them is suffering."

58. The Four Noble Truths should be directly known (*abhiññeyya*); the five aggregates should be comprehended (*pariññeyya*); craving and the related defilements should be abandoned (*pahātabba*); the Noble Eightfold Path, or calm and insight, should be developed (*bhāvetabba*); and Nibbāna, or clear knowledge and deliverance (*vijjā-vimutti*), should be realized. See S V 422 and M III 289–90.

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"In the same way, sire, anyone who has heard those who have seen Nibbāna knows that Nibbāna is happiness."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

7. Is There the Buddha? (V,1)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, have you seen the Buddha?"

"No, sire."

"Then have your teachers seen the Buddha?"

"No, sire."

"Well then, revered Nāgasena, there is no Buddha."

"But have you seen, sire, the river Uhā in the Himalayas?"

"No, revered sir."

"Then has your father seen it?"

"No, revered sir."

"Well then, sire, there is no river Uhā."

"There is, revered sir. Although neither my father nor I have seen the river Uhā, nevertheless there is the river Uhā."

"In the same way, sire, though neither my teachers nor I have seen the Blessed One, nevertheless there is the Blessed One."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

8. The Buddha is Unsurpassed (V,2)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, is the Buddha unsurpassed?"

"Yes, sire, the Blessed One is unsurpassed."

"But, revered Nāgasena, how do you know that the Buddha is unsurpassed when you have never seen him?"

"What do you think about this, sire? Would those who have never seen the great ocean know: 'Vast is the great ocean, deep, immeasurable, unfathomable; for the five great rivers constantly and continually flow into it—the Ganges, Jumnā, Aciravatī, Sarabhū, and Mahī—yet neither its emptiness nor its fullness is thereby discerned'?"

"Yes, revered sir, they would know that."

"In the same way, sire, having seen the great disciples who had attained final Nibbāna, I know that the Blessed One is unsurpassed."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

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9. Transmigration and Rebirth (V,5)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, is it the case that one does not transmigrate and yet is reborn?"

"Yes, sire, one does not transmigrate and yet is reborn."[59]

"How, revered Nāgasena, is it that one does not transmigrate and yet is reborn? Make a simile."

"Suppose, sire, some man were to light a lamp from another lamp. Did one lamp pass over to the other?"

"No, revered sir."

"In the same way, sire, one does not transmigrate and yet is reborn."

"Make a further simile."

"Do you remember, sire, when you were a boy learning some verse from a teacher?"

"Yes, revered sir."

"But, sir, did that verse pass over from the teacher?"

"No, revered sir."

"In the same way, sire, one does not transmigrate and yet is reborn."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

10. Is One Freed from Evil Deeds? (V,7)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, is there any being that transmigrates from this body to another body?"

"No, sire."

"If, revered Nāgasena, there is no one transmigrating from this body to another body, is not one freed from evil deeds?"

"Yes, sire, if one did not take rebirth one would be freed from evil deeds. But as, sire, one does take rebirth one is therefore not utterly freed from evil deeds."

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59. *Na ca saṅkamati paṭisandahati ca.* Horner translates "that which does not pass over reconnects," which may not convey the sense very clearly. The point to be made is that rebirth occurs without a transmigrating self. Mil-a explains: "Following the dissolution of the death-consciousness, a subsequent consciousness with the function of rebirth-linking is produced in the new existence. Such being the case, nothing passes over to the new existence from the preceding existence; rather, following the dissolution of the death-consciousness, a subsequent consciousness distinct from it takes rebirth here connected to it by the relation of cause and effect."

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"Make a simile."

"Suppose, sire, some man were to steal another man's mangoes, would he deserve punishment?"

"Yes, revered sir, he would deserve punishment."

"But if those mangoes he stole, sire, were not those that had been planted, why would he deserve punishment?"

"Those mangoes, revered sir, exist because of those others, therefore he would deserve punishment."

"In the same way, sire, it is through the deed one does with this mind-and-matter, be it good or bad, that one takes rebirth in another mind-and-matter and, therefore, one is not utterly freed from evil deeds."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

11. Where is Kamma? (V,8)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, a deed that is either wholesome or unwholesome has been done by this mind-and-matter. Where do these deeds remain?"

"Those deeds would follow it, sire, 'like a shadow that never leaves it' (Dhp 2)."

"Is it possible to point to those deeds, revered sir, and say that they remain either here or there?"

"It is not possible to do that, sire."

"Make a simile."

"What do you think about this, sire? Is it possible to point to the fruits of a tree that has not yet borne fruit and say that the fruits are either here or there?"

"No, revered sir."

"In the same way, sire, so long as the life continuum is not cut off, it is not possible to point to those deeds and say that they remain either here or there."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

12. Pointing to the Buddha (V,10)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, is there the Buddha?"

"Yes, sire, there is the Blessed One."

"But is it possible, revered Nāgasena, to point to the Buddha and say that he is either here or there?"

"Sire, the Blessed One has attained final Nibbāna in the element of Nibbāna that has no substrate remaining for future

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birth. It is not possible to point to the Blessed One and say that he is either here or there."

"Make a simile."

"What do you think about this, sire? When the flame of a great mass of fire has gone out, is it possible to point to that flame and say that it is either here or there?"

"No, revered sir, that flame has ceased, it has vanished."

"Even so, sire, the Blessed One has attained final Nibbāna in the element of Nibbāna that has no substrate remaining for future birth. It is not possible to point to the Blessed One who has come to an end and say that he is either here or there. But, sire, it is possible to point to the Blessed One by means of the body of the Dhamma, for Dhamma, sire, was taught by the Blessed One."[60]

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

13. Is the Body Dear to Monks? (VI,1)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, is the body dear to those who have gone forth?"

"Sire, the body is not dear to those who have gone forth."

"Then why, revered sir, do you treasure and foster it?"

"But when you have gone into battle, sire, have you been wounded by an arrow from time to time?"

"Yes, I have, revered sir."

"Then, was not the wound anointed with ointment, smeared with oil and bandaged with a soft cloth?"

"Yes, revered sir, it was."

"But was that wound dear to you, sire, that it was anointed with ointment, smeared with oil and bandaged with a soft cloth?"

"That wound was not dear to me, revered sir, and it was only anointed with ointment, smeared with oil and bandaged with a soft cloth so that the flesh might heal."

"Similarly, sire, the body is not dear to those who have gone forth; but those who have gone forth and are without cleaving look after the body for the sake of faring the holy life. Moreover, sire, the body was likened to a sore by the Blessed One and, in

60. The simile of the extinguished fire occurs at M I 487. The expression *dhammakāya*, body of Dhamma, as used here has no connotation of a metaphysical Absolute, as in Mahayana Buddhism, but signifies simply the collection of teachings.

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consequence, those who have gone forth and are without cleaving look after the body as they would a sore."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

14. The Laying Down of the Rules (VI,2)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, was the Buddha all-knowing, all-seeing?"

"Yes, sire, the Blessed One was all-knowing, all-seeing."

"Then how is it, revered Nāgasena, that he laid down the rules of training for disciples only gradually?"[61]

"But, sire, have you any physician who knows all the medicines on this earth?"

"Yes, revered sir, I have."

"Well, sire, does that physician make the invalid drink the medicine at the time when he is ill or at the time when he is not ill?"

"He makes the invalid drink the medicine, sir, at the time when he is ill, not at the time when he is not ill."

"Even so, sire, the Blessed One, all-knowing, all-seeing, did not lay down a rule of training for disciples at the wrong time, but when the proper time came he laid down a rule of training for disciples, not to be transgressed as long as they lived."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

15. The Lustful and the Lust-free (VI,7)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, what is the difference between one who has lust and one who is without lust?"

"Sire, one cleaves to things, the other does not cleave."

"But what does this mean, revered sir: 'cleaves' and 'does not cleave'?"

"The one is desirous, sire, the other is not desirous."

"As I see it, revered sir, whoever has lust and whoever is without lust, both of them alike want good solid or soft food, they want nothing that is bad."

"Sire, he who is not without lust eats his food experiencing the taste and experiencing lust for the taste. But he who is without lust eats his food experiencing the taste but not experiencing lust for the taste."

61. The Buddha did not formulate the rules of monastic discipline all at one time, but laid down each rule as the need for it became evident from misconduct by the monks and nuns.

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

16. Where Does Wisdom Dwell? (VI,8)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, where does wisdom dwell?"

"Nowhere, sire."

"Well then, revered Nāgasena, there is no wisdom."

"Where does the wind dwell, sire?"

"Nowhere, revered sir."

"Well then, sire, there is no wind."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

17. What is Saṃsāra? (VI,9)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, as to that which you mentioned: saṃsāra, what is this saṃsāra?"

"Sire, what is born here dies here; having died here it is reborn elsewhere; being reborn there, there it dies; having died there it is reborn elsewhere. Such, sire, is this saṃsāra."

"Make a simile."

"Suppose sire, some man, having eaten a ripe mango, should plant the stone and a large mango tree would grow from it and yield fruit; and that the man, having eaten a ripe mango from it too, should plant the stone and a large mango tree should grow from it too and yield fruit. In this way no end to those trees can be seen. Even so, sire, what is born here dies here; having died here it is reborn elsewhere; being reborn there, there it dies; having died there it is reborn elsewhere. Such, sire, is saṃsāra."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

18. Memory (VI,10)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, by what does one remember what was done long ago in the past?"

"By mindfulness, sire."

"Revered Nāgasena, does not one remember by mind, not by mindfulness?"

"Have you not, sire, had personal experience of some business you have done but have forgotten?"

"Yes, revered sir."

"But at that time, sire, were you without a mind?"

"No, revered sir. But there was no mindfulness at that time."

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"Then how can you, sire, say that one remembers by mind, not by mindfulness?"

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

19. How Mindfulness Arises (VII,1)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, in how many ways does mindfulness arise?"[62]

"In sixteen ways, sire. That is to say:

(1) By personal experience, as when the Venerable Ānanda and the woman lay devotee Khujjuttarā, or any others who had that power, called to mind their previous births.

(2) By some outside influence, as when others continue to remind one who is by nature forgetful.

(3) By the impression made by the greatness of some occasion, as when kings remember their coronation or when one remembers the attainment of the fruit of stream-entry.

(4) From consciousness of welfare, as when one remembers when one was happy.

(5) From consciousness of woe, as when one remembers when one was afflicted.

(6) From a similar appearance, as on seeing one like them we remember the mother or father or sister or brother or on seeing a camel or an ox or a donkey we remember others like them.

(7) From a dissimilar appearance, as when we remember that such and such a colour, sound, smell, taste or touch belongs to such and such a thing.

(8) From understanding due to speech, as when one who is by nature forgetful is reminded by others and then himself remembers.

(9) From a distinguishing mark, as when one remembers a plough-ox by its branding.

(10) From being urged to recollect, as when one who is by nature forgetful is told by another again and again, 'Try to think of it.'

62. Here the word *sati* seems to bear its original meaning of "memory" as well as the special Buddhistic sense of "mindfulness." Note that seventeen ways are given rather than the sixteen proposed, perhaps through a lack of *sati* on the part of some editor.

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(11) From reckoning, as when one who knows by training he has received in writing that such and such a letter ought to follow such and such a one.

(12) From calculation, as when, with training in calculation, accountants do big sums by their knowledge of figures.

(13) By learning by heart like the repeaters of scriptures.

(14) From mental development, as when a monk remembers his former lives with their modes and details.

(15) By reference to a book, as when kings calling to mind a previous regulation say, 'Bring the book here,' and remind themselves out of that.

(16) From association of ideas, as at the sight of goods deposited one remembers the circumstances under which they were deposited.

(17) From what was experienced, as when one remembers a thing because one has seen it, or a sound because one has heard it, or a smell because one has smelt it, or a taste because one has tasted it, or a touch because one has touched it, or a mental state because one has cognized it."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

20. What Are You Striving For? (VII,3)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, are you striving to abandon past suffering?"

"No, sire."

"Then, are you striving to abandon future suffering?"

"No, sire."

"Then are you striving to abandon present suffering?"

"No, sire."

"If you are not striving to abandon either past, future or present suffering, then what are you striving for?"

"So that this suffering should cease and no other suffering arise—I am striving for that."

"But, revered Nāgasena, is there a future suffering now?"

"There is not, sire."

"You are very clever, revered Nāgasena, to strive for removal of that which does not exist."

"But are there, sire, any hostile kings, adversaries or opponents who have risen up against you?"

"Yes, revered sir, there are."

"Was it then, sire, that you had a moat dug, a rampart raised, a city gate-way built and the grain brought in?"

"No, revered sir, that had been attended to already."

"Was it then that you, sire, trained yourself in elephant craft, in horsemanship, in chariot craft, in archery, in swordsmanship?"

"No, revered sir, I had trained in those matters already."

"For the sake of what?"

"For the sake of warding off future perils, revered sir."

"So there is a future peril now, sire?"

"There is not, revered sir."

"You are very clever, sire, in that you prepare for the warding off of future perils."

"Make a simile."

"What do you think about this, sire? If you were to become thirsty, is it then that you would have a well dug, a tank dug, a reservoir dug, saying, 'We will drink water'?"

"No, revered sir, that has been attended to already."

"For the sake of what?"

"It has been attended to, revered sir, for the sake of warding off thirst in the future."

"So there is a future thirst now, sire?"

"There is not, revered sir."

"You are very clever, sire, in that you prepare for the warding off of future thirst."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

21. The Speed of Rebirth (VII,4)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, how far is the Brahma-world from here?"

"The Brahma-world is far from here, sire. If a boulder the size of a gabled house fell from it, falling day and night for 48,000 yojanas, it would take four months to reach the earth."

"Revered Nāgasena, you speak thus: 'As a strong man might stretch forth his bent arm or bend back his outstretched arm, even so a monk who has psychic power and has attained to mastery over his mind may disappear from India and become manifest in the Brahma-world.'[63] I do not believe these words, for how could he go so many hundreds of yojanas so quickly?"

63. The exact words are not found in the Nikāyas, but the idea is the same as that conveyed by the stock canonical texts on the psychic powers. See particularly S V 274, 282–84.

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The Elder said: "Now where is the district, sire, where you were born?"

"There is an island named Alasanda, sir. I was born there."[64]

"How far is Alasanda from here?"

"Two hundred yojanas, revered sir."

"Do you recall, sire, some business you did there? Do you remember?"

"Yes, revered sir, I remember."

"Quickly have you gone those two hundred yojanas, sire."

"You are, dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

22. Distance Makes No Difference (VII,5)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, if someone died here and was reborn in the Brahma-world, and if someone died here and was reborn in Kashmir, which would take longer (to be reborn), which would be quicker?"

"They are equal, sire."

"Make a simile."

"Where is the town, sire, where you were born?"

"There is a village named Kalasi, revered sir. I was born there."[65]

"How far is the village of Kalasi from here, sire?"

"Two hundred yojanas, revered sir."

"How far is Kashmir from here, sire?"

"Twelve yojanas, revered sir."

"Please think of the village of Kalasi, sire."

"I have thought of it, revered sir."

"Please think of Kashmir, sire."

"I have thought of it, revered sir."

"Now which thought took longer, sire, which was quicker?"

"They were equal, revered sir."

"In the same way, sire, one who dies here and is reborn in the Brahma-world, and one who dies here and is reborn in Kashmir, both take exactly the same amount of time to be reborn."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

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64. Different suggestions are made as to the location of Alasanda (= Alexandria). Though it must be a part of Bactria, its exact location is not known.
65. Kalasi may be the town of Kapisi, though this remains conjectural.

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23. Factors of Enlightenment (VII,6)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, how many factors of enlightenment are there?"

"There are seven factors of enlightenment, sire."[66]

"By how many factors of enlightenment does one become enlightened, sir?"

"By one factor of enlightenment, sire, the factor of investigation of phenomena."

"Then why are seven factors mentioned, revered sir?"

"What do you think about this, sire? If a sword has been put into a sheath and not taken in the hand, is it able to cut anything you wanted to cut with it?"

"No, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, without the other six factors of enlightenment one does not become enlightened by the factor of investigation of phenomena."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

24. Merit and Demerit (VII,7)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, which is the greater, merit or demerit?"

"Merit, sire, is the greater, demerit is a trifle."

"In what way?"

"Sire, someone doing demerit is remorseful and says, 'An evil deed was done by me.' Therefore evil does not increase. But someone doing merit is not remorseful. From absence of remorse rapture is born, joy is born of rapture. The body of one who is joyful is tranquil. When the body is tranquil, he experiences happiness. The mind of one who is happy is concentrated, and he who is concentrated comprehends as it really is. In this way merit increases."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

25. Doing Evil Unknowingly (VII,8)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, for whom is the greater demerit: he who does an evil deed knowingly or he who does an evil deed unknowingly?"

"His is the greater demerit, sire, who does an evil deed unknowingly."

66. See note 33 on page 35.

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"Well then, revered sir, do we doubly punish any of our family or our court who does an evil deed unknowingly?"

"What do you think about this, sire? If a man should unknowingly take hold of a red-hot ball of iron, glowing with heat, and another should take hold of it knowingly, which would be more severely burnt?"

"He who took hold of it unknowingly, sire, would be more severely burnt."

"Even so, sire, the greater demerit is his who does an evil deed unknowingly."

"You are dexterous, revered Nāgasena."

26. The Buddha's Great Achievement (VII,16)

The Elder said: "What is difficult to do, sire, was done by the Blessed One."

"What was that, revered sir?"

"He pointed out the arrangement of these incorporeal mental states that are mental factors in consciousness and occur in one objective support, saying: 'This is contact, this is feeling, this is perception, this is volition, this is consciousness.'"

"Make a simile."

"Supposing, sire, some man had gone to the great sea in a boat and had taken some water in the hollow of his hand and tasted it with his tongue. Would he know, sire, that that was water from the Ganges, that water from the Jumnā, that water from the Aciravatī, that water from the Sarabhū, and that water from the Mahī?"

"It would be difficult to know that, revered sir."

"What is more difficult to do than this, sire, was done by the Blessed One when he pointed out the arrangement of these incorporeal mental states that are mental factors in consciousness and occur in one objective support, saying: 'This is contact, this is feeling, this is perception, this is volition, this is consciousness.'"

King Milinda was much pleased and said: "Well done, revered sir."

* * *

The Elder Nāgasena said: "Do you know, sire, what time it is now?"

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"Yes, revered sir, I know. The first watch of the night is now passed, the middle watch is in progress, the torches are glowing, four flags are raised, royal offerings will go out from the treasury."

The Bactrian Greeks said: "You are dexterous, sire, and the monk is clever."

"Yes, sirs, the Elder is clever. Should there be a teacher such as he is and a pupil such as I am, a clever person would soon learn the Dhamma."

As King Milinda was pleased with the answers to his questions, he presented Venerable Nāgasena with a woollen blanket worth a hundred thousand coins, saying: "Revered sir, from this day forth I will have your daily meal prepared for eight hundred days and give you the choice of anything in the palace that is lawful for you to take."

"No, sire, I have enough to live on."

"I know, revered Nāgasena, that you have enough to live on, yet you must protect yourself and protect me. How do you protect yourself? Against the censure of other people who may come saying that though Nāgasena pleased King Milinda, yet he received nothing. That is how you protect yourself. How do you protect me? Against the censure of other people who may come saying that though King Milinda is pleased, he gives no sign of being pleased. This is how you protect me."

"Let it so be, sire."

"As, revered sir, a lion, the king of beasts, when put into a cage, though it were made of gold, would turn its face longingly to the outside, even so do I, revered sir, though I live as master in the house, turn my thoughts longingly to the higher life of you recluses. But if I, revered sir, were to go forth from home to homelessness I would not live long, so many are my enemies."

Venerable Nāgasena, having answered King Milinda's questions, rose from his seat and went to the residence for the members of the Order. Not long after Venerable Nāgasena had departed, it occurred to King Milinda: "What did I ask? What did the revered sir reply?" Then it occurred to King Milinda: "Everything was properly asked by me, everything was properly answered by the revered sir." This also occurred to Venerable Nāgasena when he arrived at the residence for the members of the Order: "What did King Milinda ask? What did I reply?" Then it occurred to Venerable Nāgasena: "Everything

was properly asked by King Milinda, everything was properly answered by me."

As the night was waning Venerable Nāgasena, having dressed early, took his bowl and robe and went to King Milinda's palace and sat on a seat prepared for him. King Milinda greeted him, sat at a respectable distance and said: "Do not think, revered sir, that I was awake for the rest of the night rejoicing in the thought of having questioned you. Instead, I was debating with myself as to whether I had questioned you properly and I had been answered properly and I concluded that I had." The Elder too spoke thus: "Do not think, sire, that I spent the rest of the night rejoicing at having answered all you asked. Instead, I too was thinking over what had been said by us both and I came to the conclusion that you had questioned me properly and I had answered properly."

Thus did these two great men applaud what the other had said so well.

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PART IV

The Dilemmas

Living in the shadow of Venerable Nāgasena, inquiring again and again, King Milinda grew in discernment and learned the Tipiṭaka. Pondering thoroughly the scriptures in seclusion during the night, he realized that there are questions that are dilemmas, hard to solve, along with refutations. He thought that if these dilemmas were not cleared there would be contention about them in the future. Being quite pleased with the way Venerable Nāgasena had answered his questions, he decided that he would take up these dilemmas with the Elder and have him explain them for the benefit of posterity.

At dawn King Milinda bathed his head and stretched his joined palms to his forehead in salutation. When he had recollected the Perfectly Enlightened Buddhas of the past, the future and the present, he undertook eight items of good practice. He first removed his usual clothes and put on saffron-coloured garments. He vowed that for the next seven days he would give no advice on royal affairs; he would not harbour any state of mind accompanied by lust, or by hatred, or by delusion; he would speak unassumingly to his subordinates, guard himself as to body and speech, guard the six sense bases completely, and direct his mind to the development of loving kindness. He passed seven days without deviating from any of these eight good practices.

At day-break on the eighth day he had an early breakfast and then he approached Venerable Nāgasena. He honoured the Elder's feet with his head, and standing at a respectful distance, spoke thus: "Revered Nāgasena, I have a certain matter to discuss with you and want no third person present." The King also insisted that nothing should be hidden or kept secret from him, saying that he was fit to hear what is kept secret. King Milinda and Venerable Nāgasena then entered a secluded wood.

After a preliminary conversation, Venerable Nāgasena gave the King permission to question him. King Milinda then fell at

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the Elder's feet and stretched his joined palms to his forehead in salutation.

1. Homage to the Buddha (I,1)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, leaders of other sects say thus: 'If the Buddha accepts homage then the Buddha has not attained final Nibbāna, he is still fettered to the world, is within the world, a sharer in the world; therefore service rendered to him becomes barren and fruitless. But if he has attained final Nibbāna he is released from the world, he has escaped from all becomings; homage for him does not arise; one who has attained final Nibbāna does not accept anything; service rendered to one who does not accept becomes barren and fruitless.' This is a double-pronged question, this is not the sphere of those who have not attained perfection, this is the very sphere for great men. Tear asunder this net of wrong views, set it to one side; this question is put to you. Give insight to the future sons of the Conqueror for the refutation of those holding other tenets."

The Elder said: "Sire, the Blessed One has attained final Nibbāna, and the Blessed One does not accept homage. At the root of the Bodhi Tree itself acceptance was abandoned by the Tathāgata, all the more then now when he has attained final Nibbāna in the element of Nibbāna that has no substrate remaining for further existence. This, sire, was spoken by the Elder Sāriputta, the General of the Dhamma (untraced):

> Unequalled ones, though homage is being paid them
> By men and devas, unlike them all,
> Heed neither a gift nor worship.
> They accept it not, refuse it not.
> Through the ages all Buddhas were so,
> So will they ever be.

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, a son may speak in praise of his father or a father may speak in praise of his son, but this is not a reason for the refutation of those holding other tenets; it is only an expression of their own satisfaction. Please tell me fully about the reason for establishing your own tenets and disentangling the net of false views."

"Sire, the Blessed One has attained final Nibbāna, and the Blessed One does not accept homage. If devas and humans, after making a site for the jewel of the relics of the Tathāgata,

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practise the right procedure with the objective support of the Tathāgata's jewel of knowledge, they achieve three attainments.[67] If, sire, an enormous mass of fire, having blazed up, should go out, would it then again accept any supply of grass and sticks?"

"Even as it burned, revered sir, it did not accept another supply of grass and sticks, so why should it accept one when it has gone out, is allayed and insensate?"

"But, sire, when this mass of fire had ceased and was allayed, would the world be empty of fire?"

"No, revered sir. Sticks are the foundation and fuel for fire and anyone who desires a fire can, by exertion of his own strength and energy, produce a fire by twirling the fire-stick and do any work that is to be done by a fire."

"Well then, sire, false is the statement of members of other sects who say: 'A service rendered to one who does not accept becomes barren and fruitless.' As, sire, the enormous mass of fire blazed, even so did the Blessed One blaze with a Buddha's splendour in the ten-thousandfold world system. As, sire, that fire went out, even so did the Blessed One attain final Nibbāna in the element of Nibbāna that has no substrate remaining for further existence. As, sire, the mass of fire that went out did not accept another supply of grass and sticks, even so for the welfare of the world has his acceptance of goods ceased. As, sire, when a fire has gone out anyone who desires a fire can, by exertion of his own strength and energy, produce a fire by twirling a fire-stick, even so devas and humans, after making a site for the jewel of the relics of the Tathāgata, practise the right procedure with the objective support of the Tathāgata's jewel of knowledge and consequently attain three attainments. It is in this way, sire, that service rendered to the Tathāgata who has attained final Nibbāna and does not accept becomes not barren but fruitful.

"And moreover, sire, listen to this further way in which a service rendered to the Tathāgata who has attained final Nibbāna and does not accept becomes not barren but fruitful. Now, sire, does this great earth accept (seeds), thinking: "Let all seeds germinate on me'?"

"No, revered sir."

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67. The three attainments (*sampatti*) are rebirth as a human being, rebirth as a Deva, and the attainment of nibbāna.

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"But why is it, sire, that the seeds, though not being accepted by the great earth, yet germinate and, established with a strong tangle of roots, a trunk, pith and spreading branches, bear flowers and fruits?"

"Although, revered sir, the great earth is not one that accepts (seeds), it is the foundation for these seeds, it gives the condition for their growth; these seeds depending on that foundation and germinating because of that condition, are established with a strong tangle of roots, a trunk, pith and spreading branches and bear flowers and fruits."

"Well then, sire, members of other sects are confounded by their own utterances, they are defeated and obstructed if they say: 'A service done to one who does not accept is barren and fruitless.' As, sire, is the great earth, so is the Tathāgata. As, sire, the great earth accepts nothing, so the Tathāgata accepts nothing. As, sire, those seeds, depending on the great earth and germinating, are established with a strong tangle of roots, a trunk, pith and spreading branches, and bear flowers and fruits, even so devas and humans, depending on the relics and the jewel of knowledge of the Tathāgata, who has attained final Nibbāna and does not accept, are established with a strong root of the wholesome, trunk of concentration, pith of the Dhamma, the branches of morality, and they bear the flowers of emancipation and the fruits of recluseship. It is in this way too, sire, that a service rendered to the Tathāgata who has attained final Nibbāna and does not accept becomes not barren but fruitful."

"Revered Nāgasena, the deep question that was properly formulated has been made clear, that which was hidden has been made manifest, the knots have been severed, the thicket cleared, destroyed are those holding other tenets, shattered are wrong beliefs, without splendour are members of other sects; you have come to be the most excellent teacher of a host of followers."

2. Was the Buddha Omniscient? (I,2)

"Revered Nāgasena, was the Buddha omniscient?"

"Yes, sire, the Blessed One was omniscient, but knowledge and vision were not constantly and continuously present to the Blessed One. The Blessed One's omniscient knowledge was dependent on his adverting his mind. When he adverted it, he knew whatever it pleased him to know."

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"Well then, revered Nāgasena, the Buddha was not omniscient if his omniscient knowledge was due to searching."

"If there were a hundred cartloads, sire, and each cart had seven and a half measures of a certain capacity of rice and two measures of another capacity, could anyone tell in one moment the number of grains of rice in the whole?

"Now, these seven kinds of mentality occur: the mentality, sire, of those who have lust, who have hatred, who have delusion, who have defilements, whose body is not developed (for meditation), whose morality is not developed, whose mentality is not developed, and whose wisdom is not developed. The mentality of these arises with difficulty and proceeds sluggishly. As, sire, difficult and sluggish is the movement of bamboo-canes when they are dragged along with their branches entwined and entangled, so does the mentality of these types just mentioned arise with difficulty and proceed sluggishly because they are entwined and entangled with the defilements.

"The second kind of mentality is distinguished thus: The mentality, sire, of those stream-enterers for whom the sorrowful ways are shut off, who have attained right view and who have understood the Teacher's instructions, uprises buoyantly, proceeds buoyantly as far as the lower three stages are concerned,[68] but as regards the higher planes it arises with difficulty and proceeds sluggishly. As, sire, bamboo-canes that have clean stalks as far as the third knot move buoyantly when dragged along but because the branches above are entangled there is resistance there, even so the mentality of the stream-enterers uprises buoyantly, proceeds buoyantly as far as the three lower stages are concerned, but as regards the higher planes it arises with difficulty, proceeds sluggishly. For what reason? Because of utter purification in the three lower stages and because of not having got rid of the defilements to be got rid of in the higher planes.

"The third kind of mentality is distinguished thus: The mentality, sire, of those once-returners who have reduced lust, hatred and delusion to the minimum arises buoyantly, proceeds

68. Mil-a identifies the three stages (*ṭhāna*) as wrong view, doubt, and the possibility of taking rebirth in the planes of misery. This differs from Horner, who in her note identifies them as the three lower fetters: personality view, doubt, and trust in the efficacy of rules and observances.

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buoyantly in the lower five stages,[69] but as regards the higher planes it arises with difficulty, proceeds sluggishly. As, sire, bamboo-canes that have clean stalks as far as the fifth knot move buoyantly when dragged along but because the branches above are entangled there is resistance there, even so the mentality of the once-returners proceeds buoyantly as far as the five lower stages are concerned, but in regard to the higher planes it arises with difficulty, proceeds sluggishly. For what reason? Because of utter purification of mentality in the five lower stages, and because of not having got rid of the defilements to be got rid of in the higher planes.

"The fourth kind of mentality is distinguished thus: The mentality, sire, of those non-returners who have got rid of the five fetters binding to this lower shore arises buoyantly, proceeds buoyantly as far as the ten stages[70] are concerned, but as regards the higher planes it arises with difficulty, proceeds sluggishly. As, sire, bamboo-canes that have clean stalks as far as the tenth knot move buoyantly when dragged along but because the branches above are entangled there is resistance there, even so the mentality of the non-returners who have got rid of the five fetters binding to this lower shore arises buoyantly, proceeds buoyantly as far as the ten stages are concerned, but as regards the higher planes it arises with difficulty, proceeds sluggishly. For what reason? Because of utter purification of mentality in the ten stages, and because of not having got rid of the defilements to be got rid of in the higher planes.

"The fifth kind of mentality is distinguished thus: The mentality, sire, of those arahats whose cankers are destroyed, whose stains are washed away, whose defilements have been left behind, who have lived the life, done what was to be done,

69. Mil-a explains the five cases as the previous three augmented by the reduction of sensual desire and ill will.

70. The "five fetters binding to the lower shore" are the three lower fetters mentioned in note 2 plus sensual desire and ill will. The "ten cases" is problematic. Mil-a identifies them with the previous five cases along with the five lower fetters, but this involves unnecessary duplication. Horner assumes in her note that the ten cases are equivalent to the ten fetters and raises the obvious objection that a non-returner has not yet eliminated the five higher fetters. Could this distinction of "stages" reflect a classificatory scheme of another early Buddhist school lost to our later commentators?

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laid down the burden, attained their own welfare, utterly destroyed the fetters of becoming, won the analytical knowledges, and are utterly purified in the disciple's planes,[71] arises buoyantly, proceeds buoyantly in regard to the disciple's range, but arises with difficulty, proceeds sluggishly in the planes of a paccekabuddha.[72] As, sire, bamboo-canes that are clear of all knots move buoyantly when dragged along because of lack of obstructions on the bamboo, even so the mentality of the arahats arises buoyantly, proceeds buoyantly in regard to the disciple's range, but arises with difficulty, proceeds sluggishly in the planes of a paccekabuddha. For what reason? Because of utter purification in the disciple's range, and because of lack of purification in the range of a paccekabuddha.

"The sixth kind of mentality is distinguished thus: The mentality, sire, of those who are paccekabuddhas, self-dependent, without a teacher, faring alone like the horn of a rhinoceros, their minds utterly purified and spotless in their own range, arises buoyantly, proceeds buoyantly in regard to their own range, but arises with difficulty, proceeds sluggishly as regards the planes of an omniscient Buddha. As, sire, a man might cross a small river in his own locality without fear during the day or night as he desired, but later, if he saw the great sea, deep, extensive, unfathomable, and no shore beyond, he would be afraid, hesitant and would not venture to cross, even so the mentality of those who are paccekabuddhas arises buoyantly, proceeds buoyantly in regard to their own range, but arises with difficulty, proceeds sluggishly as regards the planes of an omniscient Buddha. For what reason? Because of utter purification in their own range, and because of the greatness of the range of an omniscient Buddha.

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71. Many of these epithets are taken from the stock canonical description of an arahat (as at M I, 4,etc.) though a few are additional. A noteworthy addition is *pattapaṭisambhidā*, "won the analytical knowledges."

72. A paccekabuddha is one who has reached enlightenment independently of a teacher, but who does not have the capacity to proclaim the Dhamma effectively to others. Paccekabuddhas do not arise while the Dispensation of a Perfect Buddha endures, but only during periods between the arising of Perfect Buddhas. A Perfect Buddha (*sammā sambuddha*) discovers the liberating Dhamma that had been lost to the world, realizes it, and clearly proclaims it to the world.

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"The seventh kind of mentality is distinguished thus: The mentality of those Perfect Buddhas who are omniscient, the bearers of the ten powers, confident with the four confidences, possessed of the eighteen (special) Buddha qualities, conquerors of the infinite, and whose knowledge is unobstructed, arises buoyantly and proceeds buoyantly everywhere.[73] For what reason? Because it is everywhere utterly purified. If, sire, a well-cleaned arrow, without a blemish or notch, straight and with a fine edge, was fitted to a sturdy bow and shot by a strong man into a fine linen or silken garment, would there be any sluggishness or retardation in the movement of the arrow?"

"No, revered sir. For what reason? It is due to the fineness of the garments, the clean state of the arrow, and the strength of the shot."

"Even so, sire, the mentality of the Perfect Buddhas who are omniscient ... and whose knowledge is unobstructed, arises buoyantly and proceeds buoyantly everywhere. For what reason? Because it is everywhere utterly purified. Because, sire, the Blessed One's mentality was utterly pure and buoyant, he showed forth the twin-miracle.[74] For those miracles, that derive from the mentality of the omniscient Buddhas, there is no further reason that can be alleged. Dependent on his adverting, sire, was the Blessed One's omniscient knowledge. As, sire, a man could put into one hand anything that had been in the other, could swallow food that was in his mouth, could open and shut his eyes and could stretch and bend his arms, sooner than this, sire, the Blessed One's omniscient knowledge could function, faster than this could he advert his

73. The ten powers and four confidences are at M I 69–72. The expression "conqueror of the infinite" (*anantajina*) occurs at M I 171, in a query asked by a non-Buddhist ascetic. The eighteen Buddha qualities are mentioned as a group elsewhere in the *Milinda*, but are not enumerated; they are not canonical. The qualities of omniscience and unobstructed knowledge (*sabbaññutañāṇa, anāvaraṇañāṇa*) are ascribed to the Buddha in Paṭis I 131–34.

74. The twin-miracle (*yamakapaṭihāriya*) was a wonder which the Buddha performed on several occasions to convince others of his full enlightenment. By this miracle he emits fire and water simultaneously from his body. See J-a I 77,88; Dhp-a III 213; Paṭis I 125.

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mind when it was necessary. When he had adverted it, he knew whatever it pleased him to know."

"Therefore, revered Nāgasena, adverting is done for the purpose of seeking that which is not clear when the adverting begins. Convince me in this matter by some reason."

"As, sire, a wealthy man might have abundant possessions of gold and silver, paddy, rice and other kinds of grains, ghee, oil, butter, milk, curds and honey, all put away in storerooms in jars and pots and pans. A guest, worthy of hospitality, arrives expecting to be entertained. All the food that was cooked had been finished so the provisions are taken out and a meal is prepared. Would that wealthy man, merely by deficiency of cooked food at that particular time, be rightly called poor or needy?"

"No, revered sir. Even in the palace of a mighty king there might be no food ready out of time, so why not in the house of an ordinary man?"

"Even so, sire, the omniscient knowledge of a Tathāgata may lack the smallest degree of adverting, but when he has adverted his mind he knows whatever it pleases him to know."

"Strong is the reasoning, revered Nāgasena. The Buddha was omniscient. I accept it that the Buddha was omniscient."

3. Duration of the True Dhamma (I,7)

"Revered Nāgasena, it has been said by the Blessed One: 'Ānanda, the true Dhamma will last now for only five hundred years.'[75] But, on the other hand, the Blessed One declared just before he passed away, in response to a question put by the recluse Subhadda: 'If these monks were to live rightly, the world might not be empty of arahats.'[76] If the first of these statements is correct, the second is misleading; if the second is right, the first must be false. This too is a double-pronged question, thicker than a thicket, more powerful than a strong man, more knotty than a knot. It is now put to you. Show the power of your knowledge like a sea-monster in the midst of the ocean."

"The Blessed One, sire, did make both statements you have quoted. But they are different one from the other, both in the

75. Vin II 256; A IV 278.

76. Subhadda was the last monk ordained by the Blessed One himself. The incident occurs at D II 152.

spirit and in the letter. The one deals with the duration of the Dispensation,[77] the other illustrates the practice of the religious life—two things widely distinct, as far removed one from the other as the zenith is from the surface of the earth, as heaven is from hell, as good is from evil and as pleasure is from pain. But though that be so, yet lest your enquiry be in vain, I will expound the matter further in its essential connection.

"When the Blessed One said that the true Dhamma will last for only five hundred years, then, while illustrating its destruction, he delimited the remainder of its existence, saying: 'Ānanda, the true Dhamma would last for a thousand years if nuns had not gone forth. But, Ānanda, the true Dhamma will last now for only five hundred years.' Yet, sire, while the Blessed One was speaking thus, did he speak of the disappearance of the true Dhamma or did he pour scorn on the understanding of it?"

"No, revered sir."

"Declaring and illustrating what was lost he delimited the remainder of its existence. Suppose, sire, a man whose property had been diminished might announce publicly, making sure of what remained: 'So much property have I lost, so much is still left,' even so, sire, the Blessed One, illustrating what was lost, spoke to devas and mankind of what remained, saying: 'Ānanda, the true Dhamma will last now for only five hundred years.' This refers to a time-limit for the Teaching. On the other hand, when he told Subhadda: 'If these monks, Subhadda, were to live rightly the world might not be empty of arahats,' the Blessed One was giving an illustration of the practice of the Teaching. You have confounded the limitation of the Teaching with the practice of the Teaching. If you wish I will tell you about the real connection between the two. Listen carefully, pay attention with a trustful mind.

"Suppose, sire, there is a reservoir full of fresh clean water, overflowing at the brim, bounded by an embankment. If the water in that reservoir had not dried up and a great cloud above should pour down heavy and continuous rain, would the water in that reservoir be exhausted and dried up?"

"No, revered sir."

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77. The Dispensation (*sāsana*) is said to pass through three periods: when it is steadfast (*ṭhita*), when it is declining (*osakkana*), and when it disappears (*antaradhāna*).

"For what reason, sire?"

"Revered sir, because of the continuous downpour of rain from that cloud."

"Even so, sire, the reservoir of the excellent true Dhamma in the Conqueror's Teaching is full of the fresh and stainless waters of good behaviour, morality, special qualities, right custom and practice and, overflowing, it endures having surpassed the acme of becoming.[78] If the sons of the Buddha were to make the rain of the cloud of good behaviour, morality, special qualities, and right custom and practice pour down heavily and continuously, so would this reservoir of the excellent true Dhamma in the Conqueror's Teaching last for a very long time and the world would not be empty of arahats. This was the meaning of the Blessed One's words when he said: 'And if these monks, Subhadda, were to live rightly the world might not be empty of arahats.' If, sire, people were to continually supply a mighty mass of fire with dry cow-dung, dry sticks and dry grass would that mass of fire go out?"

"No, revered sir, more and more would that mass of fire burn, more and more would it blaze forth."

"Even so, sire, the excellent Teaching of the Conqueror blazes forth in the ten-thousand world system, through good behaviour, morality, special qualities, right custom and practice. If the sons of the Buddha, endowed with the five factors of striving[79] and constantly diligent, should strive still more, and if, with desire aroused, they should train themselves in the three trainings[80] and should fulfil completely the moral precepts both in acting and avoiding, so would the excellent Teaching of the Conqueror last to a still higher degree for a very long time and the world might not be empty of arahats. This was the meaning of the Blessed One's words when he said: 'And if the monks, Subhadda, were to live rightly the world might not be empty of arahats.' If, sire, people were to continually polish with fine soft red powder a stainless mirror

78. The acme of becoming (*bhavagga*) is the highest plane within the mundane universe, the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.
79. The five factors of striving (*padhāniyaṅga*) are: faith, health, honesty, energy, and wisdom. See M II 95, 128.
80. The three trainings (*sikkhā*) are that of the higher morality, the higher mind, and the higher wisdom (*adhisīla*, *adhicitta*, *adhipaññā*).

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that was already bright and shining, well polished, smooth and glossy, would dirt and dust and mud arise on its surface?"

"No, revered sir. On the contrary, it would become even more stainless than before."

"Even so, sire, stainless by nature is the excellent Teaching of the Conqueror. Dispelled are the dust and the dirt and the stain of the defilements. If the sons of the Buddha were to be submissive to the excellent Teaching of the Conqueror by means of good behaviour, morality, special qualities, right custom and practice and the special quality of submissiveness and austerity, so would this excellent Teaching of the Conqueror last a long time and the world would not be empty of arahats. This was the meaning of the Blessed One's words when he said: 'And if the monks, Subhadda, were to live rightly the world might not be empty of arahats.' Grounded on practice, sire, is the Dispensation of the Teacher, in practice is its essence. It will last so long as practice does not disappear."

"Revered Nāgasena, when you speak of the disappearance of the true Dhamma, what is this disappearance of the true Dhamma?"

"There are, sire, these three modes of disappearance of the Teaching. There is the disappearance of spiritual realization, the disappearance of its practice, and the disappearance of its outward sign.[81] When spiritual realization disappears there is no understanding of the Dhamma even for one who is faring along properly; when practice disappears, the promulgation of the rules of training disappears, only the outward sign remains; when the outward sign disappears, there is a break in the tradition. These, sire, are the three modes of disappearance."

"Revered Nāgasena, the profound question that was properly formulated has been made clear, the knot is severed, destroyed are the tenets of others, shattered and without splendour. You have come to be the foremost among teachers of schools."

81. Spiritual realization (*adhigama*) is attainment of the four stages of sanctity, stream-entry, etc. The outward sign (*liṅga*) is the yellow robe of the monks, etc.

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4. The Buddha's Ailments (I,8)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, when the Tathāgata attained omniscience, did he do so after burning up all that is unwholesome or not?"

"Sire, the Blessed One attained omniscience after burning up all that is unwholesome. There was no residue of the unwholesome in the Blessed One."

"But, revered sir, didn't painful feelings arise in the Tathāgata's body?"

"Yes, sire. At Rājagaha his foot was wounded by a stone splint; he was afflicted by dysentery; once his humours were disturbed and the physician Jīvaka prepared a purgative for him; he once had a wind ailment and his attendant, the Elder, looked for hot water."[82]

"If, revered Nāgasena, the Tathāgata attained omniscience after burning up all that is unwholesome, then the statement that he was afflicted by these ailments must be false. But if he was really afflicted by these ailments, then the statement that he attained omniscience after burning up all that is unwholesome must be false. For there is no feeling without kamma. All that is felt is rooted in kamma; one experiences it only through kamma. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you; it is for you to solve."

"It is not the case, sire, that all that is felt is rooted in kamma. Feelings arise, sire, through eight causes, and many beings experience feelings by reason of these eight causes. What are the eight? Some feelings arise here on account of wind; some on account of bile; some on account of phlegm; some through a combination of these three; some through a change in the weather; some through reckless conduct; some through external agency; and some feelings arise that are born as the result of kamma. Therein, those people who say 'Kamma oppresses beings,' excluding the (other) seven causes—that statement of theirs is false."[83]

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82. The Buddha's foot was injured when he was hit by a splint from a boulder hurled at him by Devadatta; the incident, recorded at S I 27 and Vin II 193, is described below. The attack by dysentery preceded his parinibbāna, at D II 127 and Ud 82. The purgative administered by Jīvaka is at Vin I 279. The attendant Upavāṇa Thera sought hot water for the Buddha's wind ailment at S I 174.

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"Revered Nāgasena, the feelings due to wind, bile, phlegm and the other causes all originate from kamma alone. It is actually through kamma that they arise."

"Sire, if all ailments originate from kamma alone, there would not be any characteristics to distinguish them into types. Yet when the wind is disturbed, this happens because of ten things: cold, heat, hunger, thirst, over-eating, standing too long, over-exertion, excessive walking, an external agency, and as the result of kamma. The first nine factors operate—not in the past or in the future—but in this present existence. Therefore it cannot be said that all feelings originate from kamma.

"When the bile is disturbed, this happens because of three things: cold, heat and unsuitable food. When the phlegm is disturbed, this happens because of three things: cold, heat and food-and-drink. When the wind and the bile and the phlegm become disturbed together and combine, each brings along its respective feeling. Feeling born of a change in the weather arises through a change in the weather. Feeling born of reckless conduct arises from reckless conduct. As to the feeling due to external agency: there is mere action, there is the result of kamma. The feeling born as the result of kamma arises from a kamma done in the past.[84]

"Thus, sire, those feelings born as the result of kamma are few, the others are many. Fools go too far when, in regard to this, they say: 'All is born as the result of kamma alone.' But it

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83. The enumeration of the eight causes of feeling—here equivalent to painful bodily feeling—is found in the Moliya Sīvaka Sutta (S IV 230–31), quoted by Nāgasena in the full text of this dilemma (but deleted in the abridgement).

84. It is puzzling why, in the explanation of "feeling due to external agency" (*opakkamikā vedanā*), this feeling is said to include "mere action" (*kiriya*), apparently meaning feeling due to an incidental physical cause, *and* result of kamma (*kammavipāka*), while feeling due to external agency is distinguished from "feeling born as result of kamma" (*kammavipākajā vedanā*). Perhaps the difference is that the kamma-resultant feeling due to external agency refers to a feeling that arises when an external agent provides the occasion for a past kamma to ripen, while the "feeling born as a result of kamma" arises solely from kamma without any intermediate agency. This, however, is conjecture. The text is far from clear, and Mil-a is not very helpful in explaining the difference.

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is not possible, without the knowledge of a Buddha, to make an analysis of that kamma.

"Now when the Blessed One's foot, sire, was cut by the stone splint, that feeling did not originate from any of the other causes, nor was it born as the result of kamma. It was due only to an external agency. For Devadatta had borne malice towards the Tathāgata for many hundreds of thousands of births. Because of his malice he took a large heavy boulder and hurled it at the Master, thinking it would fall upon his head. But then two other rocks came together and intercepted the boulder before it reached the Tathāgata; through the collision a chip split off, struck the Blessed One's foot, and drew blood. That feeling of the Blessed One, sire, was produced either as the result of kamma or from mere action: there is no other kind of feeling beyond that.[85]

"As, sire, when a seed does not sprout, this is due either to bad soil or to a bad seed—and when food does not digest properly, this is due either to a bad stomach or to bad food—so that feeling of the Blessed One was produced either as the result of kamma or from mere action: there is no other kind of feeling beyond that.

"But while the Blessed One never experienced feelings born as kamma result or from reckless conduct, he did experience feelings arisen from the other six causes. But that feeling could not deprive the Blessed One of life.

"Feelings that are desirable and undesirable, pleasant and unpleasant, assail this physical body. Just as a clod of soil, thrown into the air, would fall upon the great earth, but not as a consequence of some deed previously done by the earth, so too that stone splint struck the Tathāgata's foot, but not as a consequence of some deed previously done by him. It is the same with the other bodily ailments that afflicted the Blessed One: none were produced by kamma. They were produced by one or another of the six other causes.[86]

85. Mil-a paraphrases the phrase "there is no other kind of feeling beyond that" (*taduddhaṃ natth'aññā vedanā*) thus: "There is no other feeling produced as the result of kamma beyond, i.e. in addition to, the feeling produced by the mere action." It appends a long explanation, the sense of which seems to be that in the case of the Buddha, past bad kamma can function to provide an occasion for other circumstances to produce painful results, but such kamma does not directly produce its own results.

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"So, sire, it is not the case that all feelings are born as the result of kamma. The Blessed One, sire, attained omniscience after burning up all that is unwholesome."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena. That is so and I accept what you say."

5. The Tathāgata's Solitary Meditation (I,9)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, you say: 'Whatever was to be done by the Tathāgata was all accomplished at the root of the Bodhi Tree; there was then nothing further he had to do, nothing he had to add to what he had already done.' But then there is also talk of three months' solitary meditation.[87] If the first statement is correct then the second must be false. If the second is right then the first must be wrong. For there is no need for solitary meditation for one who has done what was to be done. Solitary meditation is for one who still has something to be done. It is the sick man who has need for medicine, not the healthy; the hungry man who has need for food, not the man whose hunger has been quenched. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you; it is for you to solve it."

"Both statements, sire, are true. Solitary meditation has many special qualities. All Tathāgatas when they have attained omniscience have meditated in solitude. It is while they are recollecting these special qualities of what was well done that they practise solitary meditation. As, sire, when a man has gained a boon in the presence of a king and obtained property, then, on recollecting the special quality of what was well done, he remains constantly in attendance on that king; or as, sire, a man who was gravely ill, when he has frequented a physician and achieved a cure, constantly frequents that physician—even so, sire, all the Tathāgatas when they have attained omniscience have meditated in solitude. It is while they are recollecting these special qualities of what was well done that they practise solitary meditation.

86. Against this, Horner points out in a footnote that at Apadāna I 300, it is said that the injury to the Buddha's foot was due to the ripening of a deed he had done in a past life: hurling down a stone on two brothers.

87. The first statement seems to be an oral tradition and cannot be traced verbatim to the Pali Canon. The three months' meditation retreat is mentioned at S V 13.

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"It is on beholding twenty-eight special qualities in solitary meditation, sire, that Tathāgatas practise solitary meditation. What are the twenty-eight? Solitary meditation protects him who meditates, it increases the lifespan, it gives strength, cleanses him from faults, removes him from a bad reputation, conduces to fame, dispels discontent, furnishes content, removes fear, makes for self-confidence, removes indolence, generates energy, removes lust, removes hatred, removes delusion, humbles pride, breaks down all doubt, makes the mind one-pointed, makes the mind pliable, produces joy, makes him serious, gains him much advantage, it makes him worthy of reverence, brings rapture, it fills him with delight, shows the true nature of formations, uproots becoming and rebirth, and yields complete recluseship.

"Moreover, sire, for four reasons Tathāgatas practise solitary meditation. For what four? So that they may dwell at ease, for an abundance of the faultless good qualities, on account of it being the road to all noble things, and because it has been praised, lauded and exalted by all Buddhas. It is for these four reasons that Tathāgatas practise solitary meditation; it is not because they still have something further to be done or because there is something to be added to what has been done. Tathāgatas practise solitary meditation because of their realization of the divers advantages of its special qualities."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena. That is so and I accept what you say."

6. The Limit of Three Months (I,10)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this too was said by the Blessed One: 'Ānanda, the Tathāgata's four bases of psychic power have been developed, increased, made a vehicle, made a ground, maintained, consolidated and well undertaken. Ānanda, if the Tathāgata so desired he might remain for a kappa or for what was left of it.'[88] 'And again, it was said: 'Three months from now the Tathāgata will attain final Nibbāna.' [89] If the first of these statements was true then the

88. D II 103; S V 259; Ud 62. On the four bases of psychic power see note 33 on page 35. The word *kappa* usually refers to the lifetime of a world system, an inconceivably long period of time (see S II 181). In the present context the word is taken to mean the human lifespan (*āyukappa*), not the great aeon or cosmic lifespan (*mahākappa*).

limit of three months must have been false. If the second statement was true then the first must have been false. There is no thundering of the Tathāgatas about what is causally impossible. The Blessed Buddhas speak no misleading words, they utter the truth and speak sincerely. This too is a double-pronged question, profound, very abstruse, hard to understand; it is put to you. Burst asunder this net of false views, set it aside, burst asunder the tenets of others."

"Both these statements, sire, were made by the Blessed One. Kappa in that connection means the full lifespan. The Blessed One, sire, was not exalting his own power when he said so. He was proclaiming the potency of psychic power. As, sire, a king's thoroughbred horse might be as swift as the speed of the wind, and the king, in declaring its power and speed in the presence of all his court, would say: 'If he wished this noble steed of mine could cross the earth to its ocean boundary and be back here again in a moment.' Now though the king would not show that horse's speed in the presence of the court, yet it had that speed. Even so, sire, when the Blessed One was proclaiming his own potency of psychic power he spoke thus, and by that potency he was able to remain for a kappa or for what was left of it. But the Blessed One did not show that potency to his audience. As far as all becomings are concerned, sire, the Blessed One was without desire and all becomings were condemned by the Tathāgata. Sire, it has been said by the Blessed One: 'As, monks, even a small quantity of excrement is of evil smell, so I do not praise becoming even for a trifling time, not even for the time of a finger-snap.'[90] Now, would the Blessed One, sire, who had seen in all becomings a resemblance to excrement, harbour desire for and attachment to becomings with the support of the potency of psychic power?"

"No, revered sir."

"Well then, sire, it was when the Blessed One was proclaiming the potency of psychic power that he roared the lion's roar of a Buddha such as was this."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; thus it is and I accept it."

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89. D II 119; S V 262; Ud 64.
90. A I 34.

7. The Abolition of the Rules of Training (II,1)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this too was said by the Blessed One: 'I teach the Dhamma, monks, from super-knowledge, not without super-knowledge.' On the other hand he said of the regulations of the Vinaya: 'When I am gone, Ānanda, let the Order, if it should so desire, abolish the lesser and minor rules of training.[91] Now, revered Nāgasena, were these lesser and minor rules of training wrongly laid down without ground and in ignorance since the Blessed One allowed them to be abolished after his passing? If the first statement had been true, the second would have been wrong. If the second statement was really made, then the first was false. This too is a double-pronged question, delicate, subtle, very abstruse, deep, very profound, hard to understand. It is put to you. Show in regard to it your pervading power of knowledge."

"In both cases, sire, the Blessed One said as you have declared. But in the second case it was to test the monks that he said it, to try whether, if leave were granted them, they would, after his passing, abolish the lesser and minor rules of training or still adhere to them. As, sire, a king of kings might say to his sons: 'This great country, my children, reaches to the sea on every side. It is hard to maintain it much longer with the forces we have at our disposal. So, my children, when I am gone, you had better abandon the outlying districts along the border.' Now, sire, would the princes, on the death of their father, give up those outlying districts already in their power?"

"No, revered sir, kings are greedier than that. The princes in their lust for power might subjugate a country twice or thrice the size of what they had, but they would never give up what they already possessed."

"Even so, sire, the Tathāgata spoke thus testing the monks: 'When I am gone, Ānanda, let the Order, if it should so desire, abolish the lesser and minor rules of training.' Sire, the sons of the Buddha, for complete freedom from suffering and in their desire for Dhamma, would preserve even more than another hundred and fifty rules of training-how then should they let go of the rules of training that had been laid down originally?"

"Revered Nāgasena, when the Blessed One referred to 'the lesser and minor rules of training'—people are confused about

91. The first statement occurs at A I 276, the second at D II 154.

them, bewildered, undecided, fallen into doubt, as to which are the lesser rules of training and which the minor."

"Sire, a lesser rule of training refers to an offence of wrong-doing, a minor rule of training to one of wrong speech.[92] These two together make up the lesser and minor rules of training. The great Elders of old, sire, were also in doubt about this matter and failed to reach unanimity when this question was raised at the council for fixing the Blessed One's Doctrine."[93]

"This secret of the Conqueror's, hidden for long, revered Nāgasena, is today, at the present time, disclosed and made clear in the world."

8. Esoteric Teaching (II,2)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this was said by the Blessed One: 'In regard to the Tathāgata's teachings, Ānanda, there is no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher.'[94] On the other hand, when the Elder Mālunkyaputta asked the Blessed One a question he did not answer it.[95] This problem, revered Nāgasena, will have two ends on one of which it must rest: either that of not knowing or that of keeping something

92. In Pali, *dukkaṭa* and *dubbhāsita*, respectively. As Nāgasena will immediately show, the Buddha's own great disciples were uncertain about the meaning of those terms.

93. The "council for fixing the Blessed One's Doctrine" was the First Great Council held at Rājagaha three months after the Buddha's passing. This council was convened by 500 arahats, who decided not to abolish any rule of training already laid down by the Master. At this council (documented at Vin II 287), Ven. Ānanda was censured for not having asked the Blessed One to declare which were the lesser and minor rules of training.

94. This statement comes at D II 100. The "closed fist of a teacher" (*ācariyamuṭṭhi*) refers to the practice of some teachers of keeping secret their innermost teaching until, on their death-bed, they confide this teaching to their favourite pupil.

95. In MN 63 (M I 426ff.) the monk Mālunkyaputta asked the Blessed One about the eternity and infinity of the world, etc., threatening to leave the Order if he would not answer. The Buddha refused to reply, and related the simile of the man shot with a poisoned arrow who would not permit the physician to remove it until he learned the particulars about his assailant and about the arrow itself. The Dhamma is for removing the arrow of suffering and not for answering speculative questions.

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secret. If the first statement is true it must have been out of ignorance that he did not answer the Elder Malunkyaputta. But if he knew and still did not reply, then the first statement must be false. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you; it is for you to solve."

"The Blessed One, sire, made that first statement to Ānanda and he did not reply to Malunkyaputta's question. But that was neither out of ignorance nor for the sake of concealing anything. Sire, there are four ways of answering questions. What four? There is the question to be answered with a definite reply, there is the question to be answered with an analysis, there is the question to be answered with a counter-question, there is the question to be set aside.[96]

"Now, what is the type of question to be answered with a definite reply? It is such as this: 'Is material form impermanent? Are feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness impermanent?'

"What is the type of question to be answered with an analysis? It is such as this: 'But is the impermanent (the same as) material form?' 'Is the impermanent (the same as) feeling ... perception ... mental formations ... consciousness?'[97]

"What is the type of question to be answered with a counter-question? It is such as this: 'What then, is everything discriminated by the eye?'

"What is the type of question to be set aside? It is such as this: 'Is the world eternal ... not eternal ... finite ... infinite ... both ... neither? Is the soul the same as the body? Is the soul one thing and the body another? Does the Tathāgata exist after death, or does he not exist after death, or does he both exist and not exist after death, or does he neither exist nor not exist after death?'

"Because, sire, that question of the Elder Malunkyaputta was one to be set aside, the Blessed One did not answer it. Why should such a question be put aside? Because there is no reason or ground for answering it. There is no utterance or speech of the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, that is without reason, without ground."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore I accept it."

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96. See D III 229; A II 46.
97. An analysis is needed to explain that while all material form, etc., is impermanent, the impermanent cannot be equated with material form, etc., since it extends to all five aggregates.

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9. Fear of Death (II,3)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this too was said by the Blessed One: 'All beings tremble at punishment, all fear death.' But again he said: 'An arahat has passed beyond all fear.'[98] How then, revered Nāgasena, does an arahat tremble with fear at punishment? Or are the beings who are being burnt and scorched in hell afraid of that death which would release them from that awful place of woe? If the Blessed One said that all beings tremble at punishment and all are afraid of death, then the statement that the arahat has passed beyond all fear must be false. But if the last statement was really spoken by him, then the other must be false. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you; it is for you to solve."

"Sire, it was not with regard to arahats that the Blessed One spoke when he said: 'All beings tremble at punishment, all fear death.' The arahat is an exception to this statement, for all cause for fear has been removed from the arahat. It was with regard to those beings, sire, who still have defilements and who are still infatuated with the view of self and who are lifted up and cast down by pleasures and pains that the Blessed One made that statement. All bourns have been cut off by the arahat, all modes of arising extinguished, rebirth destroyed, the snares abolished; delight in all becomings has been rooted out, all formations have been extirpated, the wholesome and the unwholesome have been ended, ignorance has been demolished, consciousness has been made seedless, all the defilements have been burnt up, and worldly things have been conquered by him. Therefore, an arahat does not tremble at any fear.

"Suppose, sire, a king had four chief ministers, faithful, famous, trustworthy and placed in positions of high authority, and that when some business had arisen the king should have a command issued touching all the people in his realm, to the effect: 'Let everyone pay me a tax, and do you, my four chief ministers, carry out that business.' Now, sire, would any tremor due to the fear of taxation arise in those four chief ministers?"

"No, revered sir."

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98. The first statement is found at Dhp 129; the second appears to be a paraphrase of Dhp 39.

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"For what reason, sire?"

"Because the king has placed them in the highest positions, taxation does not affect them; they are beyond taxation. When the king commanded everyone to pay him a tax, he was referring to the rest of his subjects."

"Even so, sire, the statement that all beings tremble at punishment, all fear death, does not apply to the arahats." "Let it be, revered Nāgasena, I accept it as you say. The arahat is an exception to this statement; all other beings are full of fear. But those beings who are suffering painful, sharp and severe agonies in hell, who are tormented with burnings all over their bodies and limbs, who are full of lamentation and cries for pity, who find no protection or refuge or help, who are afflicted beyond measure, who in the worst and lowest conditions are still destined to further pain, can these poor, burning wretches be afraid of death?"

"Yes, they can."

"But, revered Nāgasena, is not hell a place of certain pain? So why should beings in hell be afraid of death which would release them from that certain pain? What! Are they fond of hell?"

"No, indeed. They do not like it. They long to be released from it. That, sire, is the power of death because of which terror arises in them."

"This I do not believe, revered Nāgasena, that terror of death arises in those who want to be released. They must rejoice at the prospect of the very condition they long for. Convince me by a reason."

"Death, sire, is a cause for fear for those who have not seen the Four Noble Truths. Whoever fears a black snake or an elephant or a lion or a hyena or a wild buffalo or fire or water, while fearing any of these, is fearing death. This, sire, is the majesty of the essential nature of death because of which all beings who still have defilements tremble at death and fear it. It is in this sense that even beings in hell, who long to be released from it, are afraid of death.

"Suppose, sire, a boil were to arise, full of pus, on a man's body, and he, in pain from that disease, and wanting to escape from the danger of it, were to call in a surgeon; and the surgeon, accepting the call, were to have a lancet sharpened, have sticks to be used as cauterisers put in the fire, and have lye and salt ground together on a grindstone. Would not fright

arise in that afflicted man, sire, with the cutting of the sharp lancet, the burning of the caustic sticks, and the application of the lye and salt?"

"Yes, revered sir."

"If the sick man who wants to be free from his ailment can be afraid of pain, just so can beings in hell, though they long to be released from it, be afraid of death."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena, thus it is, and I accept it as you say."

10. Protective Recitals (II,4)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this too was said by the Blessed One:[99]

> Not in the sky, not in the ocean's midst,
> Not in the most secluded mountain cleft,
> Not in the whole wide world is found the spot
> Where standing one can escape the snare of death.

"On the other hand, protective recitals[100] were promulgated by the Blessed One, that is to say, the Ratana Sutta, the Khandha Paritta, the Mora Paritta, the Dhajagga Paritta, the Atanatiya Paritta and the Angulimala Paritta.[101] If, revered Nāgasena, one cannot escape death either in the sky or in the mid-ocean or in a mountain cleft or anywhere in the whole wide world, then protective recitals are useless. But if by protective recitals one can find an escape from death, then the statement in the verse I quoted is false. This too is a double-pronged question, more knotty than a knot. It is now put to you and you have to solve it."

99. Dhp 127.

100. *Paritta*. In Sri Lanka they are called *pirit*. Their recitation, usually by monks but sometimes by laypeople, often at a formal all-night ceremony, is popular in all Buddhist lands. See Piyadassi Thera, *The Book of Protection* (BPS 1975).

101. The Ratana Sutta (Sn p. 39, Khp VI) was delivered by the Buddha to dispel a plague in the city of Vesālī. The Khandha Paritta (Vin II 109) was taught as a protection against snakes. The Mora Paritta (from J-a 159) is a protection against enemies. The Dhajagga Paritta (S I 218–20) is an antidote to fear and terror. The Āṭānāṭiya Paritta (D III 195–202) praises the virtues of the seven past Buddhas as a protection against harmful influences. The Aṅgulimāla Paritta (M II 103) is a protection for pregnant women, to ensure safe delivery.

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"The Blessed One, sire, said the verse you have quoted and protective recitals were promulgated by him. But that is for those who still have some term of life remaining, who are of full age and who are free from an obstruction due to kamma.[102] There is no ceremony or means to prolong the life of one whose span of existence is coming to an end. Sire, even if a thousand jars of water were poured over a dead and dried up tree, sapless, moistureless and lifeless, that tree will never become fresh again and put forth sprouts and leaves. Even so, sire, there is no ceremony or means, no medicine and no protective recital to prolong the life of one whose span of existence is coming to an end. But, sire, protective recitals are a protection and assistance to those who have a period yet to live, who are full of life and are free from an obstruction due to kamma. As, sire, a farmer guards the grain when it is ripe and ready for harvesting by preventing water from entering among the corn, but makes it grow by giving it water when the corn is young and full of life, even so, sire, protective recitals should be put aside in the case of one whose span of existence is coming to an end, but for those who have a period of life remaining and are in their prime, protective recitals are like medicines and may be chanted with benefit."

"If, revered Nāgasena, one whose span of existence is coming to an end dies, and if one who has a period of life yet remaining lives, well then, protective recitals are useless."

"Have you, sire, ever seen a disease being turned back by medicines?"

"Yes, revered sir, several hundred times."

"Well then, sire, to say that protective recitals are useless is a false statement."

"Revered Nāgasena, I have seen doctors administer medicines by means of beverages and external applications as a result of which diseases have been assuaged."

"And, sire, when the sound of the protective recitals is heard, all the illnesses abate at the recitation, all calamities disappear, though the tongue had been dry, the heart beating but feebly and the throat sore. Have you, sire, ever seen anyone bitten by a snake having the poison sucked back by that snake by means of an incantation?"

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102. *Apetakammāvaraṇa*. That is, they are not bound to die due to a kamma so powerful that it must eventuate in death.

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"Yes, revered sir, even today that practice exists in the world."

"Well then, sire, to say that protective recitals are useless is a false statement. When a protective recital has been said, a snake, ready to bite, will not bite but close its jaws; the club which robbers hold aloft to strike will never strike; an enraged elephant rushing up will suddenly stop; a great blazing mass of fire that is surging towards one will die out; a deadly poison one has eaten turns into an antidote or serves as food; assassins who have come to kill will turn into slaves; the trap into which one has trodden will not hold him."

"Revered Nāgasena, do protective recitals protect everyone?"

"They protect some, sire, some they do not protect."

"Well then, revered Nāgasena, a protective recital is not always useful."

"Now, sire, does food preserve everyone's life?"

"It preserves some, revered sir, some it does not preserve." "Well then, sire, food does not preserve everyone's life." "There are two reasons, revered Nāgasena, why food destroys life: because too much is eaten or because of bad digestion. Even life-giving food can destroy life because of a bad digestion." "In the same way, sire, a protective recital protects some, some it does not protect. There are three reasons, sire, why a protective recital does not protect: because of an obstruction due to kamma, because of an obstruction due to the defilements, because of lack of faith. A protective recital, sire, that is a protection to beings may lose its protecting power because of acts done by those beings themselves. It is, sire, as a mother nourishes the child in her womb, brings it forth with gentle care, and having brought it forth and cleansed it of its impurities, stains and mucus, then anoints it with the best and most beautiful perfumes; and if others abuse it or strike it, then dragging them along, full of excitement, she brings them before her husband; but if her child is naughty or comes in late then she strikes him with her fists or a stick. Now, would his mother, sire, get seized and be dragged along and made to appear before her husband?"

"No, revered sir." "Why not, sire?" "Because it was the child's own fault, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, it is through his own fault that a person makes barren a protective recital that has protective power for beings."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; the question has been well analysed, the thicket made clear, the darkness made light and the net of speculative views disentangled thanks to you, a most excellent teacher."

11. Leading the Order (II,7)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this too was said by the Blessed One: 'Ānanda, it does not occur to a Tathāgata thus: I will lead the Order of monks, or, the Order of monks is dependent on me.' But, on the other hand, when he was extolling the virtues and nature of the Blessed One Metteyya, he said: 'He will lead an Order of monks numbering several thousands, even as I now lead an Order of monks numbering several hundreds.'[103] If the first statement is right then the second is wrong. If the second statement is right, the first must be false. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you; it is for you to solve."

"Sire, you quote both passages correctly. In this question one meaning is incomplete, one meaning complete. The Tathāgata, sire, does not conform to the assembly, but the assembly conforms to the Tathāgata. This, sire, is conventional parlance: 'I,' 'mine'; this is not an ultimate meaning. Absent, sire, is affection in a Tathāgata, absent is clinging, and for a Tathāgata there is no seizing hold of anything as 'mine.' But there is help for others by cleaving to him. As, sire, the earth is the support of beings who are based on the ground and is their home, yet the great earth has no longings such as: 'These are mine,' even so, the Tathāgata is the support of all beings and is their home, yet the Tathāgata has no longings such as: 'These are mine.' Or as a massive rain-cloud that is raining heavily gives growth to grass, trees, cattle and men and maintains their continuity, and though they all subsist by rain, yet the great cloud has no longings such as: 'These are mine,' even so, sire, the Tathāgata generates and maintains wholesome mental states for all beings, and though all these beings subsist by the Teacher, yet the Tathāgata has no longings such as: 'These are

103. The first statement occurs at D II 100, the second at D III 76. Metteyya is the next Perfect Buddha, due to appear in the world after the Dispensation of the present Buddha Gotama has utterly vanished.

mine.' What is the reason for this? It is due to his having got rid of wrong view of self."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena, the question has been well unravelled in a variety of ways; what was profound has been made clear; the knot is severed, the thicket made open, darkness made light; shattered are the tenets of others; vision has uprisen for the sons of the Conqueror."

12. "Dhamma is Best" (III,1)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, it was said by the Blessed One: 'For it is the Dhamma, O Vāseṭṭha, which is the best in the world, as regards both what we see now and what is yet to come.' But, on the other hand, a lay devotee, a householder, who is a stream-enterer for whom the possibility of rebirth in any place of woe has passed away, who has attained to view and understood the Doctrine, even such a one ought to salute and to rise from his seat for a monk, even though a novice and a worldling.[104] Now, if the Dhamma be the best, that rule of conduct is wrong, but if that be right then the first statement must be wrong. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you; it is for you to solve."

"Sire, the Blessed One said what you have quoted and you have rightly described the rule of conduct. But there is a reason for that rule and that is this. There are these twenty personal qualities making up true recluseship and two outward signs by reason of which the recluse is worthy of salutation, of respect and of reverence. What are they? The best form of self-restraint, the highest kind of self-control, right conduct, calm manners, mastery over his deeds and words, subjugation of his senses, patience, docility, faring in solitude, delight in solitude, meditation in solitude, conscience-and-shame, energy, diligence, undertaking the training, recitation of the rules, interrogation by his teacher or preceptor, delight in morality, freedom from attachment to worldly things, fulfilment of the rules of training, wearing of the saffron robe and being shaven. A monk lives undertaking these special qualities. By being deficient in none of them, by being perfect in all, accomplished in all, endowed with all of them, he reaches

104. The quotation is from D III 84, the Buddha's rejoinder to the brahmin claim to caste superiority. A worldling (*puthujjana*) is a person who has not reached any of the four stages of sanctity.

forward to the condition of arahatship, to the condition of those who have nothing else to learn, to the best stage of existence. It is because he is thought of as close to arahatship that it is proper for a lay devotee who is a stream-enterer to salute and rise for a monk even though he is a worldling. It is because he sees him to be in the company of those in whom all evil has been destroyed and because he feels that he is not in such a society that the lay devotee who is a stream-enterer thinks it proper for him to salute and rise for a monk even though he is a worldling. It is because he knows he has joined the noblest brotherhood and that he himself has reached no such state that the lay devotee who is a stream-enterer thinks it proper for him to salute and rise for a monk even though he is a worldling. It is because he listens to the recitation of the disciplinary code, while he himself cannot ... because he knows that he allows others to go forth and ordains them thus extending the teaching of the Conqueror, which he himself is incapable of doing ... because he knows that he is one who carries out completely the slightest rules of training, which he himself cannot observe ... because he knows that he wears the outward signs of recluseship and carries out the intention of the Buddha, while he himself is far removed from that ... because he knows that though he has given up his hair and beard and is unanointed and wears no ornaments, yet he is anointed with the perfume of righteousness, while he himself is addicted to jewellery and fine apparel that the lay devotee who is a stream-enterer thinks it proper for him to salute and rise for a monk even though he is a worldling.

"Moreover, sire, it is because he knows that not only are all these twenty personal qualities which go to make a recluse and the two outward signs found in the monk, but he also carries them on and trains others in them, that the lay devotee who is a stream-enterer, realizing that he has no part in that tradition, in the maintenance of the faith, thinks it proper for him to salute and rise for a monk even though he is a worldling. Sire, it is like a prince who has studied various kinds of lore with the family priest and trained in the duties of a warrior; after a time when he has been anointed king he still salutes his teacher and rises for him thinking: 'He was my teacher.' Even so, sire, it is proper for a lay devotee who is a stream-enterer to salute and rise for a monk even though he is

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a worldling, thinking: 'He is a teacher, one who upholds the succession of teachers.'

"Moreover, sire, you may know by this fact the greatness and unequalled magnitude of the condition of a monk: If a lay devotee who is a stream-enterer achieves arahatship, one of two results must happen to him—he must either die on that very day or take upon himself the condition of a monk. For, sire, that going forth is immovable, great and lofty, that is to say, the condition of being a monk."

"Revered Nāgasena, the question has been gone into with knowledge; it is well unravelled by your powerful and great discretion; it is a question that only one as full of discretion as you are is competent to disentangle thus."

13. The Buddha's Harsh Speech (III,4)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, it was said by the Elder Sāriputta, the General of the Dhamma: 'In the conduct of speech, the Tathāgata is quite pure. The Tathāgata, brethren, has no wrong conduct of speech that he should guard thinking: Let not another think this of me.' On the other hand, when the Tathāgata was promulgating the first offence entailing Defeat, as a result of the improbity of the Elder Sudinna, Kalandaka's son, he addressed him with harsh words, calling him a foolish fellow.[105] That Elder, on being so called, terrified of his teacher and overcome with remorse, was unable to comprehend the noble path. Now if the first statement is correct, the allegation that the Tathāgata called the Elder Sudinna a foolish fellow must be false. But if that be true, then the first statement must be false. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you; it is for you to solve."

"What the Elder Sāriputta said is true, sire, and the Blessed One did call the Elder Sudinna a foolish fellow. But that was

105. The first statement is at D III 217, and again at A IV 82. The first offence entailing Defeat (*pārājika*), i.e. expulsion from the Order, is the rule against sexual intercourse, laid down on account of the Elder Sudinna. Sudinna had sexual relations with his former wife because his parents, upset by his ordination, wished him to beget an heir to the family fortune. He was not expelled from the Order because at the time of his transgression no formal training rule had been laid down prohibiting sexual intercourse. The account occurs at Vin III 11ff.

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not said out of rudeness of disposition, it was said without anger, it was merely pointing out the real nature of his conduct in a way that would do him no harm. If any man, sire, in this birth, does not understand the Four Noble Truths, then his being born as a man is in vain. If, while doing one thing, he acts in a different way he is called a foolish fellow. Therefore, the Blessed One addressed the Elder Sudinna with words of truth and not with words apart from the facts."

"But, revered Nāgasena, if someone should abuse another, even though he speaks the truth, we would inflict a small fine on him. For he is guilty of an offence, inasmuch as he, although for something real, used abusive words that might lead to a breach of the peace."

"Have you, sire, ever heard of anyone bowing down before, rising up for, showing reverence to, or making an offering to a wrong-doer?"

"No, revered sir, whatever kind of wrong-doer he be, he merits censure, they cut off his head or torture him or imprison him or deprive him of his goods."

"Well then, sire, did the Blessed One act properly or not?" "Properly, revered Nāgasena. When they hear of it the world of men and gods will be ashamed and conscience-stricken, more so when they see a wrong-doer, and most of all when they approach one to pay him honour."

"Now, sire, would a physician administer pleasant things as medicine in a case where all the humours of the body were affected and the whole frame was disorganized and full of disease?"

"No, revered sir, wishing to put an end to the disease he would give sharp and scarifying drugs."

"Even so, sire, the Tathāgata gives instructions for the allayment of all the diseases of the defilements. The words of the Tathāgata, even when harsh, soften beings and make them pliable. As, sire, hot water softens anything that can be softened and makes it pliable, even so, sire, the Tathāgata's words, even when harsh, are full of benefit and compassion as the words of a father would be to his children. Sire, just as the drinking of nasty smelling decoctions and the swallowing of highly concentrated drugs remove illnesses from beings, even so, sire, the Tathāgata's words, even though harsh, are full of benefit and compassion. As, sire, a ball of cotton, even though large, falling

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on a man causes him no pain, even so, sire, the Tathāgata's words, even though harsh, give rise to anguish in no one."

"In many a way, revered Nāgasena, has this question been well analysed. It is good; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

14. The Buddha's Last Illness (III,6)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, it was said by the Elders who were holding a Recital of the Dhamma:[106]

> When he had eaten Cunda's meal,
> The coppersmith's—thus have I heard—
> The Buddha felt that sickness dire,
> That sharp pain even unto death.

But again, it was said by the Blessed One: 'These two alms offerings, Ānanda, equal, of equal fruit and of equal advantage, are of much greater fruit and of much greater advantage than any other alms offering.'[107] Now, revered Nāgasena, if sharp sickness fell upon the Blessed One after he had partaken of Cunda's alms and sharp pains arose in him even unto death, then that other statement must be wrong. But if that is right, then the first must be wrong. How could that alms offering be of great fruit when it turned to poison, gave rise to disease, put an end to his lifespan and took away his life? Tell me a reason for this for the refutation of those holding other tenets. People are bewildered about this, thinking that the dysentery came from his eating too much out of greediness. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you, it is for you to solve."

"The Blessed One, sire, said that there were two alms offerings equal, of equal fruit and of equal advantage and of much greater fruit and much greater advantage than any other alms offering. What two? There is that alms offering which when a Tathāgata has eaten he attains supreme Enlightenment and that which when he has eaten he attains final Nibbāna in the Nibbāna-element that has no substrate remaining for further existence. But this alms offering is of great and special quality, of manifold advantage. The devas, sire, uplifted and pleased in

106. *Dhammasaṅgīti.* This refers to the First Great Council at Rājagaha. The verse occurs at D II 128 and Ud 82, but with *dhīro*, "wise one," in place of *buddho*.

107. D II 135. The first alms offering was that presented by Sujātā on the eve of the Buddha's enlightenment. The "fruitfulness" of the offering refers to the merit accruing to the donor.

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mind, and thinking: 'This is the last meal the Tathāgata will take,' sprinkled a deva-like nutritive essence over those truffles.[108] Indeed, they were well and lightly cooked, pleasant, juicy and beneficial for digestion. It was not from that source, sire, that any sickness fell upon the Blessed One, but it was because of extreme weakness of his body and because of the waning of his lifespan that the disease arose in him and grew worse and worse. As, sire, when a fire is burning in a normal way, if fresh fuel is supplied it will blaze up much more, or as when a stream is flowing along in a normal way, if heavy rain falls it will become a mighty river with a great gush of water, or as the stomach when full in a normal way would stretch if more food is eaten, even so, sire, it was because of the extreme weakness of his body and because of the waning of his lifespan that the disease arose in his body and grew worse and worse. There was no defect, sire, in that alms offering and you cannot impute any harm to it."

"Revered Nāgasena, why is it that those two alms offerings are of much greater fruit and of much greater result than any other alms offering?"

"Because of the attainment of the exalted conditions which resulted from them."

"Of what conditions, revered Nāgasena, are you speaking?"

"Of the attainment of nine successive abidings, sire, in forward order and in reverse order." [109]

"Revered Nāgasena, was it only on two days that the Tathāgata entered in the highest degree those nine successive abidings, in forward order and in reverse order?"

"Yes, sire."

"It is wonderful, revered Nāgasena, it is marvellous, that of the great and glorious gifts in this Buddha-field, none compares with these two alms offerings. It is wonderful and marvellous how great are those nine successive abidings, in that because of them, those gifts are made of greater fruit and

108. There is no certainty about the *sūkaramaddava* which constituted the Buddha's last meal. It could have been mushrooms, tender sprouts of bamboo, or tender pork.

109. The nine successive abidings (*anupubbavihāra*) are the four fine-material jhānas, the four immaterial attainments, and the cessation of perception and feeling. Forward order is from the lowest to the highest, reverse order from the highest to the lowest.

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greater advantage than any others. It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

15. Veneration of the Relics (III,7)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this too was said by the Tathāgata: 'Do not, Ānanda, be occupied with honouring the Tathāgata's bodily remains.' And again it was said:[110]

> Venerate that relic of him who is to be venerated;
> By doing so you will go from here to heaven.

Now if the first injunction was right the second must be wrong, and if the second is right the first must be wrong. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you, it is for you to solve."

"Both the passages you quoted, sire, were spoken by the Blessed One. But it was not to everyone, it was to the Conqueror's sons[111] that it was said: 'Do not, Ānanda, be occupied with honouring the Tathāgata's bodily remains.' Veneration is not work for the Conqueror's sons; but rather, this is to be done by the Conqueror's sons: the thorough comprehension of formations,[112] proper attention, contemplation of the four foundations of mindfulness, fixing the mind on the object of meditation, fighting the defilements, and intentness on their own goal. These are the things the sons of the Conqueror ought to do, leaving veneration to others, whether devas or humans. That is so, sire, just as it is the business of the princes of the earth to learn all about elephants, horses, chariots, bows, swords, documents, the law of property, the policy of statecraft, hearing cases, gaining intelligence, fighting and recruiting, while husbandry, merchandise and the care of cattle are the business of ordinary merchants and workers; or just as it is the business of brahmins and their sons to study the Vedas, the significance of marks, oral tradition, ancient lore, linguistics and other sciences, while husbandry, merchandise and the care of cattle are the business of ordinary merchants and workers; even so, sire, veneration is not work

110. The first statement is at D I 3, the second at Sn 554 (MN 92).
111. The "Conqueror's sons" (*jinaputta*) are the monks.
112. Comprehension of formations (*sammasanaṃ saṅkhārānaṃ*) is insight into the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and lack of self in all conditioned things.

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for the Conqueror's sons, but rather this is to be done by the Conqueror's sons: the thorough comprehension of formations, proper attention, contemplation of the four foundations of mindfulness, fixing the mind on the object of meditation, fighting the defilements and intentness on their own goal. These are the things the sons of the Conqueror ought to do, leaving veneration to others, whether devas or humans. Therefore, sire, it was in the sense of "Do not devote yourselves to such things as are not your business, but to such things as are so,' that the Tathāgata said: "Do not, Ānanda, be occupied with honouring the Tathāgata's bodily remains.' If the Tathāgata had not said this, sire, the monks would have been obsessed with his bowl and robe and, through them, would have paid veneration to the Buddha."[113]

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

16. The Buddha's Exultation (III,10)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, the Blessed One said: "If, monks, others should speak in praise of me or of the Dhamma or of the Order, you should not thereupon indulge in joy or delight or exultation of the mind.' On the other hand the Tathāgata was so delighted and pleased and exultant at the deserved praise bestowed by Sela the brahmin that he still further magnified his own goodness in that he said:[114]

> A king am I, Sela,
> An incomparable king under Dhamma.
> I roll the Wheel by Dhamma,
> The Wheel that cannot be rolled back.

Now if the passage first quoted is right then the second must be wrong, but if the second is right then the first is wrong. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you, it is for you to solve."

"Both your quotations, sire, are correct. But the first passage was spoken by the Blessed One when he was illustrating correctly, exactly, truthfully and, as it is, the distinguishing mark of the Dhamma with its essence and its flavour. The second passage was not spoken for the sake of gain or fame or for

113. Worship of the bowl did in fact develop. The Chinese pilgrim Fa Hsien saw this bowl-worship at Peshawar in about 400 A.C.
114. The first statement is at It 101, the second at Sn 554 (MN 92).

the sake of winning adherents or because he was yearning for pupils. But out of sympathy, compassion and desiring their welfare, conscious that thereby: "There will be understanding of Dhamma by this one and by three hundred brahmin youths,' he said: "A king am I, Sela, an incomparable king under Dhamma.'"

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, thus do I accept it."

17. The Dismissal of the Elders (III,12)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this too was said by the Blessed One: "I am without wrath, gone is barrenness of mind.' On the other hand, the Tathāgata dismissed the Elders Sāriputta and Moggallāna together with their company of disciples.[115] Now, revered Nāgasena, did the Tathāgata dismiss the company when he was angry or did he dismiss it when he was pleased? Please explain this to me. If, revered Nāgasena, he dismissed the company when he was angry, well then, wrath was not subdued in the Tathāgata. If he dismissed it when he was pleased, well then, it was dismissed without ground and in ignorance. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you, it is for you to solve."

"Sire, the Blessed One did say: "I am without wrath, gone is barrenness of mind' and he did dismiss the Elders Sāriputta and Moggallāna with their company of disciples. But that was not through ill-temper. Suppose, sire, some man stumbled over a root or a stake or a stone or a potsherd or on uneven ground and fell. Would it be that the great earth, angry with him, made him fall?"

"No, revered sir. The great earth feels neither anger against any man nor delight. It is altogether free from ill will, neither does it need to fawn on anyone. He stumbled and fell because of his carelessness."

"Even so, sire, there is no ill-temper or satisfaction in the Tathāgatas. The Tathāgatas, Arahats, Perfect Buddhas are free from approval and repugnance. So the company was dismissed on account of what it itself had done through its own fault. As to this, sire, the great ocean does not endure

115. The first statement is at Sn 19. The dismissal of the disciples occurs at M I 457. The Buddha dismissed the monks because, when greeting each other, they made a great noise "like fishermen hauling in a catch."

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association with a corpse. Any corpse there may be in it, that does it promptly cast up on the shore. Now, sire, is the great ocean angry that it casts up that corpse?"

"No, revered sir, there is no ill-temper or satisfaction in the great ocean; the great ocean is free from approval and repugnance."

"Even so, sire, there is no ill-temper or satisfaction in the Tathāgatas. The Tathāgatas, Arahats, Perfect Buddhas are free from approval and repugnance. So the company was dismissed on account of what it itself had done through its own fault. As, sire, one who has stumbled on the earth is fallen down, so one who has stumbled in the Conqueror's excellent teaching is dismissed. As a corpse is cast up by the great ocean, so one who has stumbled in the Conqueror's excellent teaching is dismissed. But though the Tathāgata, sire, dismissed those monks, he desired their welfare, he desired their weal, he desired their happiness, he desired their purification. He dismissed them thinking: "Thus will these be released from birth, old age, disease and death.'"

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; thus it is, so do I accept it."

18. Suicide (IV,5)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this too was said by the Blessed One: "A monk should not attempt suicide. Whosoever does so should be dealt with according to the rule.'[116] But on the other hand you say: "On whatsoever subject the Blessed One was addressing the disciples, he always, and with various similes, taught the Dhamma in order to bring about the destruction of birth, ageing, disease and death; and whoever had passed beyond birth, ageing, disease and death, him did he praise with the highest praise.'[117] Now if the Blessed One forbade suicide that saying of yours must be wrong, but if not then the prohibition must be wrong. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you; it is for you to solve."

116. Attempted suicide is prohibited at Vin III 82. An unsuccessful attempt at suicide is an offence of wrongdoing (*dukkaṭa*), a light transgression; but encouraging another person to commit suicide becomes an offence entailing Defeat if the person so incited takes his own life.

117. This seems more like an epitome of the Dhamma than a direct quotation from the Nikāyas.

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"The regulation you quote, sire, was laid down by the Blessed One, and yet our saying you refer to is true. There is a reason for this, a reason for which the Blessed One objected to a person destroying himself and yet also aroused him to do so."

"What, revered Nāgasena, may that reason be?"

"One who is moral, sire, possessed of morality, is like an antidote for destroying the poison of the defilements in beings. He is like a healing balm for allaying the sickness of the defilements, like water for carrying off the dust and dirt of the defilements, like a ship for beings to go beyond the four floods,[118] like a caravan leader for taking beings across the desert of births, like the wind for extinguishing the three fierce fires in beings,[119] like a great rain-cloud for filling beings with purposeful thought, like a teacher for making beings train themselves in what is wholesome, and he is like a good guide for pointing out to beings the path of security. It was in order that one who was moral like that might not perish, sire, who was of many special qualities, of various special qualities, of immeasurable special qualities, a mass of special qualities, a heap of special qualities, and bringing welfare to all beings, that the Blessed One, sire, out of compassion for all beings, laid down this rule of training: "A monk should not attempt suicide. Whosoever does so should be dealt with according to the rule.'

"Furthermore, sire, this was said by the Elder Kumāra Kassapa, a versatile talker, when he was illustrating the world beyond to the chieftain Pāyāsi: "For as long a time, chieftain, as recluses and brahmins who are moral and of lovely character stand fast, for so long do they fare along for the welfare of the great masses of people, for the good and gain and weal of gods and men.'[120] But what is the reason for which the Blessed One aroused his disciples to bring about the destruction of birth, ageing, disease and death? Birth, sire, is suffering, so is ageing, disease and death. Sorrow is suffering, so is lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Association with the unpleasant is suffering, so is separation from the pleasant. Death of a

118. The four floods (*ogha*), so called because they sweep beings through the cycle of existence, are: sensual desire, desire for existence, wrong view, and ignorance.

119. The three fires are lust, hatred, and delusion.

120. At D II 332.

mother is suffering, so is death of a father, brother, sister, child, wife or of a relation. Misfortune concerning one's relations is suffering, so is misfortune concerning one's health, wealth, moral habit or one's views. Fear produced by despots is suffering, so is fear produced by robbers, enemies, famine, fire, flood, waves, crocodiles, whirlpools and fierce fishes. Fear of self-reproach is suffering, so is fear of others' reproach, punishment or misfortune. What is fearful in an assembly is suffering, so is fear for one's livelihood, the foreboding of death and the various punishments inflicted on criminals.

"As, sire, when it has rained down on the slopes of the Himalayas the water flows, in its course along the Ganges, through and over rocks and pebbles and gravel, whirlpools and eddies and rapids, and the stumps and branches of trees which obstruct and oppose its passage, even so, sire, each being caught in the succession of births and rebirths has to endure such and such manifold and various sufferings. Occurrence, sire, is suffering, non-occurrence is bliss.[121] Illustrating the special quality of non-occurrence and the peril there is in occurrence, the Blessed One, sire, for the realization of non-occurrence, roused disciples to pass beyond birth, ageing, disease and death. This was the reason, sire, why the Blessed One roused disciples."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; the question is well unravelled, the explanation reasonably spoken; so it is, thus do I accept it."

19. Originality of the Buddha's Teaching (V,4)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this has been said by the Blessed One: 'The Tathāgata, monks, the Arahat, the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha is the discoverer of a way that was unknown.' But on the other hand he said: 'I, monks, saw the ancient way, the ancient path, that had been followed by the Perfect Buddhas of the past.'[122] If, revered Nāgasena, the Tathāgata is the discoverer of a way previously unknown, then it must be wrong that it was an ancient way that he saw, an ancient path that had been followed by the Perfect Buddhas of the past. But if the way he saw was an ancient way,

121. Occurrence (*pavatta*) is saṃsāra, non-occurrence (*appavatta*) is Nibbāna.
122. The first statement is at S III 66, the second at S II 105.

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then the statement that it was unknown must be wrong. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you; it is for you to solve."

"Both the quotations you make, sire, are accurate and both the statements so made are correct. When the previous Tathāgatas, sire, had disappeared, then, there being no teacher left, their way too disappeared. And it was that way—though then broken up, crumbled away, gone to ruin, closed in, no longer passable, quite lost to view—that the Tathāgata, having gained thorough knowledge of it, saw by the eye of his wisdom and knew that that was the way the Perfect Buddhas of the past had followed. Therefore he said: "I, monks, saw the ancient way, the ancient path, that had been followed by the Perfect Buddhas of the past.' And it was a way which, there being no teacher left through the disappearance of previous Tathāgatas, had become broken up, crumbled away, gone to ruin, closed in, no longer passable and quite lost to view, that the Tathāgata made passable again. Therefore did he say: "The Tathāgata, monks, the Arahat, the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, is the discoverer of a way that was unknown.'

"It is, sire, as when a mother brings forth from her womb the child that is already there, and the saying is that the mother has given birth to the child; or, sire, as when some man sees something that had been lost, people declare: "That article was produced by him'; or, sire, as when a man who is clearing a wood carries away some soil, people declare: "That is his soil,' but though that soil was not produced by him he is called the owner of the soil because he had done some work on it; even so, sire, did the Tathāgata, having gained a thorough knowledge of it by the eye of his wisdom, bring back to life and make passable again a way that was already there, though then broken up, crumbled away, gone to ruin, closed in, no longer passable and quite lost to view. Therefore he said: "The Tathāgata, monks, the Arahat, the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha is the discoverer of a way that was unknown.'"

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

20. Is the Tathāgata a King or a Brahmin? (V,8)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this too was said by the Blessed One: "I, monks, am a brahmin, one to ask a favour of.' And again it was said: "A king am I, Sela.'[123] If,

revered Nāgasena, the Blessed One was a brahmin, then he must have spoken falsely when he said he was a king. But if he were a king, then he must have spoken falsely when he said he was a brahmin. He must have been either a noble warrior or a brahmin since no one is of two castes in one birth. This too is a double-pronged question; it is put to you; it is for you to solve."

"Both quotations you have made, sire, are correct. But there is a good reason why the Tathāgata should have been both a brahmin and a king."

"What is this reason, revered Nāgasena?"

"Sire, because all evil unwholesome states were put away by the Tathāgata, because they were got rid of, removed, dispelled, annihilated, destroyed, exhausted, extinguished and allayed, the Tathāgata is called a brahmin.

"A brahmin, sire, is one who has passed beyond hesitation, perplexity and doubt. The Tathāgata too has done this, so he is called a brahmin.

"A brahmin, sire, has escaped from every sort and class of becoming, is entirely free from evil and from stain and is without a peer. The Tathāgata is all of these things, so he is called a brahmin.

"A brahmin, sire, is one who cultivates within himself the highest and best of the excellent and supreme conditions of the heart. The Tathāgata too does this, so he is called a brahmin.

"A brahmin is one who sustains the ancient instruction, custom and tradition of learning by heart, teaching, accepting of gifts, taming, control and restraint. The Tathāgata carries on the line of the tradition of the ancient instruction, custom and tradition enjoined by the Conquerors regarding all these things, so he is called a brahmin.

"A brahmin engages in meditation, an abiding in immense ease. The Tathāgata too does this, so he is called a brahmin.

"A brahmin knows what has happened in all his becomings and bourns. The Tathāgata too knows this, so he is called a brahmin.

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123. The dilemma arises because each statement seems to appoint the Buddha to a different social class in the Indian caste system, the first to the brahmin caste, the second to the khattiyas (to which he did belong by birth, though that is not the intention of his statement here).

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"The appellation "brahmin' was not given to the Blessed One by his mother or father, nor by relatives or kinsmen, nor was it given by recluses and brahmins, nor by devas. This appellation signifying final release, that is to say "brahmin,' is a true description of the Buddhas, of Blessed Ones who, at the root of the Bodhi Tree have, together with their attainment of omniscient knowledge, routed Māra's armies and put away all evil unwholesome states whether past, future or present. This is a true description of what was attained, what appeared and what came about. For this reason the Tathāgata is called a brahmin."

"But for what reason, revered Nāgasena, is the Tathāgata called a king?"

"A king, sire, is anyone who reigns and governs the people. The Blessed One too reigns through Dhamma in the ten-thousandfold world-system, he governs people together with the devas, the world with Māras and Brahmās, with recluses and brahmins, so he is called a king.

"A king, sire, is one who, surpassing all people and men, bringing joy to his relatives and grief to his opponents, raises aloft the pure white sunshade of sovereignty, the renowned symbol of great fame and splendour, adorned with a full hundred ribs, and its handle made of solid hard-wood. The Blessed One too, bringing grief to Māra's army that was faring along wrongly, and joy to devas and humans who were faring along rightly, raised aloft in the ten-thousandfold world-system the pure white sunshade of sovereignty, pure and stainless in the whiteness of emancipation, the renowned symbol of great fame and splendour, adorned with a full hundred ribs of knowledge, and its handle made of solid hard-wood of forbearance. For this reason too the Blessed One is called a king.

"A king is one to be much honoured by the multitudes of people who approach him and come to his presence. The Blessed One too, sire, is one to be much honoured by the multitudes of devas and humans who approach him and come to his presence. For this reason too the Blessed One is called a king.

"A king, sire, when pleased with a strenuous servant, gladdens his heart by bestowing, at his own good pleasure, a gift the servant has chosen. The Blessed One too, sire, when pleased with anyone who has been strenuous in word or deed or thought, gladdens his heart by bestowing upon him, as a

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selected gift, the supreme deliverance from all sorrow. For this reason too the Blessed One is called a king.

"A king is one who severely rebukes, brings to ruin or destroys someone who has transgressed a royal command. Sire, a shameless man who, transgressing a command in the noble teaching of the Blessed One, and being degraded, looked down upon and found fault with for his moral weakness, is shut out from the Conqueror's noble teaching. For this reason too the Blessed One is called a king.

"A king is one who, in his turn proclaiming laws and regulations according to the instructions laid down in succession by righteous kings of ancient times, and thus carrying on his rule in righteousness, becomes beloved and dear to the people, desired in the world and, by the force of his righteousness, establishes his dynasty long in the land. The Blessed One, sire, proclaiming in his turn laws and regulations according to the instructions laid down in succession by the Buddhas of ancient times, and thus in righteousness being teacher of the world, is beloved and dear to both gods and humans, desired by them and, by the force of his righteousness, makes his teaching last long in the land. For this reason too the Blessed One is called a king.

"Thus, sire, so manifold are the reasons why the Blessed One should be both brahmin and king that a very subtle monk could not enumerate them even in an aeon. What is the good then of speaking of them any further? So accept what I have said here in brief."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

21. The Tathāgata's Hesitation (V,10)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, you say: 'The Tathāgata, through four incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons, brought his omniscient knowledge to perfection for the sake of pulling out great masses of people from saṃsāra.' But on the other hand you say: 'Just after he attained to omniscience, his mind inclined to little effort and not to teach the Dhamma.'[124] As, revered Nāgasena, an archer or his pupil who had trained for many days in practice for the sake of fighting might hesitate when the day of the great battle had come, or as a wrestler or his pupil who had trained for many days in wrestling might hesitate when the day of the wrestling

match had come, even so the Tathāgata, through four incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons, brought his omniscient knowledge to perfection for the sake of pulling out great masses of people from saṃsāra, yet, when he had attained to omniscience, he hesitated to teach the Dhamma. Now, revered Nāgasena, was it because of fear that the Tathāgata hesitated, or was it because of unclarity, or was it from weakness, or was it because he had not, after all, attained to omniscience? What was the reason for that? Please tell me the reason so as to remove my doubts. For if for so long a time he had perfected his knowledge for the sake of pulling out great masses of people from saṃsāra, then the statement that he hesitated to teach Dhamma must be wrong. But if that is true, the other statement must be false. This too is a double-pronged question, deep, difficult to penetrate; it is put to you; it is for you to solve."

"The statements in both the passages you quote, sire, are correct. But when the Tathāgata attained to omniscience his mind inclined to little effort and not to teach the Dhamma because he saw how difficult it was for beings who were delighting in sensual pleasures and tightly grasping the false view of self to penetrate the Dhamma that is deep, subtle, difficult to see, difficult to understand and exquisite. So he wavered at the thought: "Whom shall I teach? What shall I teach?' Precisely his intention was that the Dhamma should be penetrated by beings.

"As, sire, a physician on approaching a man who is suffering from all kinds of diseases considers thus: "By what means or by what medicine can I allay his disease?', even so, sire, the Tathāgata having seen people suffering from all the diseases of the defilements and how difficult it was for them to penetrate the Dhamma that is deep, subtle, difficult to see, difficult to understand and exquisite, wavered at the thought: "Whom shall I teach? What shall I teach?' Precisely his intention was that the Dhamma should be penetrated by beings.

"Moreover, sire, this is an inherent necessity in all Tathāgatas, that they should teach the Dhamma at the request of

124. The duration of the Bodhisatta's practice of the perfections is mentioned in the Buddhavaṃsa and Cariyāpiṭaka, two relatively late books of the Khuddaka Nikāya. The Buddha's hesitation over teaching the Dhamma is described at Vin I 5 and M I 167–68.

Brahmā. What is the reason for this? At that time all these people—ascetics and wanderers, recluses and brahmins—were worshippers of Brahmā, reverencing him and relying on him. Therefore at the thought: "The world with the devas will bow down to the Dhamma, feel confidence and faith in it because that one who is so powerful, famed, well known, renowned, high and lofty bows down to it,' Tathāgatas teach Dhamma at the request of Brahmā. As, sire, that which some king or king's chief minister bows down to or reverences, that will the rest of the people bow down to and reverence because one who is very powerful has bowed down to it, even so, sire, as Brahmā bows down to Tathāgatas, so will the world and devas bow down to them. The world, sire, honours what is honoured. Therefore Brahmā requests all Tathāgatas to teach Dhamma, and for this reason Tathāgatas teach Dhamma at the request of Brahmā."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena, well unravelled is the question; the explanation was very learned. So it is, therefore do I accept it."

22. Why Only One Buddha at a Time? (VI,2)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this too was said by the Blessed One: "This is impossible, monks, it cannot come to pass that in one world-system two Supremely Enlightened Buddhas should arise simultaneously; this possibility does not exist.'[125] When they are teaching, revered Nāgasena, all Tathāgatas teach the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment; when they are talking, they talk about the Four Noble Truths; when they are making disciples train themselves, they make them train themselves in the three trainings; and when they are instructing, they instruct in the practice of diligence.[126] If, revered Nāgasena, the teaching is one, the talk is one, the training is one, and the instruction is one of all Tathāgatas, why should not two Tathāgatas arise at the same

125. M III 65; A I 27; Vibh 336.
126. The thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiyā dhammā*): the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five spiritual faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. See note 33 on page 35. The three trainings are in morality, concentration, and wisdom.

time? Already by the arising of only one Buddha this world is illumined; if there were a second Buddha all the more would this world be illumined by the light of them both. Furthermore, when two Tathāgatas are exhorting they could exhort at ease, and when instructing they could instruct at ease. Tell me the reason for this so that I may be without perplexity."

"This ten-thousandfold world-system, sire, is the sustainer of one Buddha, it sustains the special qualities of one Tathāgata only. If a second Tathāgata were to arise the world could not bear him, it would shake and tremble, it would bend this way and that, it would disperse, scatter into pieces, dissolve, be utterly destroyed. Just as a boat, sire, might be able to carry one passenger across. Then when one man had got on board it would go along evenly. Suppose a second man were to come along, similar to the first in age, appearance, stage of life, size, and lean and strong in all his limbs, and he were to embark in the boat: could that boat sustain both of them?"

"No, revered sir, it would shake and tremble, it would bend this way and that, it would break into pieces, be shattered, dissolved and utterly destroyed; it would sink into the waves."

"Besides that, sire, this is a natural characteristic of the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, that one Buddha only should arise in the world. And why? By reason of the greatness of the virtue of omniscient Buddhas. Of other things also, whatever is mighty in the world is singular. The broad earth is great and it is only one. The ocean is mighty and it is only one. Sineru, the king of the mountains, is great and it is only one. Space is mighty and it is only one. Sakka, the king of the gods, is great and he is only one. Māra, the Evil One, is great and he is only one. Mahā-Brahmā is mighty and he is only one. The Tathāgata, Arahat, Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, is great and he is alone in the world. Where these uprise there is no occasion for a second. Therefore, sire, only one Tathāgata, Arahat, Perfectly Enlightened Buddha arises in the world at one time."

"The question has been well discussed, revered Nāgasena, with similes and reasons. Even an unintelligent person on hearing this would be satisfied, how much more then one of great wisdom like myself? It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

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23. Why Become a Monk? (VI,4)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, it was said by the Blessed One: 'I, monks, praise right practice in a layman and in one who has gone forth. If either a layman or one who has gone forth is practising rightly then, because of his right practice, he is successful in the method, in Dhamma and in what is wholesome.'[127]

"If, revered Nāgasena, a layman—clad in white, enjoying sense pleasures, dwelling as master in a house crowded with wife and children, accustomed to Benares sandalwood, using garlands, scents and unguents, handling gold and silver, his turban studded with a variety of jewels and gold—is practising rightly, he is successful in the method, in Dhamma and in what is wholesome. And if one who has gone forth—his head shaven, wearing saffron robes, obtaining alms from others, perfectly fulfilling the four branches of morality, and who undertaking them conducts himself according to the hundred and fifty rules of training, and conducts himself according to the thirteen modes of ascetic practices[128]—is practising rightly, he is successful in the method, in Dhamma and in what is wholesome. What then, revered sir, is the difference between the layman and one who has gone forth? Your austerity is fruitless, your renunciation is useless, your watching over the rules of training is barren, and your undertaking the ascetic practices is in vain. What is the good of piling up suffering in these ways? Is not happiness to be reached simply through happiness?"

"The words you ascribe to the Blessed One, sire, are rightly quoted. Thus it is, sire, that one who is practising rightly is the best. And, sire, if one who has gone forth thinks: 'I am the one who has gone forth' but should not be practising rightly, then he is far from recluseship, far from brahminhood. How much more then a layman, clad in white? Whether he be a layman, sire, or one who has gone forth, if he is practising rightly he is successful in the method, in Dhamma and in what is wholesome. Nevertheless, sire, it is the one who has gone forth who

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127. M II 197.

128. The four branches of morality (a post-canonical category) are: restraint by the monastic rules, restraint of the sense faculties, purity of livelihood, and proper use of the requisites. The thirteen ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*) are dealt with in Part VI.

is chief and master in recluseship. Going forth, sire, has many special qualities, innumerable and immeasurable special qualities, and it is not possible to measure them just as it is not possible to count the number of waves in the great ocean. Whatever one who has gone forth may have to do, that he accomplishes without delay. For what reason? One who has gone forth is of few wishes, he is contented, secluded, detached from the world, of stirred up energy, without desire, homeless, complete in morality, without guile and skilled in the practice of shaking off the defilements. It is like an arrow that goes properly when it is shot if it is without a notch, even, well cleaned and straight."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

24. The Backsliders (VI,6)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, this Dispensation of the Tathāgata is mighty, essentially true, precious, excellent, noble, unrivalled, pure, stainless, clear, and faultless. It is not right to let a layman go forth so long as he is a mere householder. It is only when a householder has attained to the fruit of the first path and cannot revert to secular life that he should be allowed to go forth. For what reason? When people who are still evil go forth in this Dispensation, they could give it up and revert to the secular life. Because of their backsliding people may think: "Vain, indeed, must be this Dispensation of the recluse Gotama that these people have turned back from it.' This is the reason for what I say."

"Supposing, sire, there were a pond full of pure, clear, cold water. Some man, dirty, covered with stains and mud, should come there, and without bathing in it should turn back again, still dirty as before. Whom would the people blame for that, sire, the dirty man or the pond?"

"The people would blame the dirty man, revered sir, thinking: "He came to the pond but, without washing, turned back dirty as before. How can a pond itself wash this person who does not want to wash? What defect is there in the pond?'"

"Even so, sire, the Tathāgata constructed the pond of the noble true Dhamma which is full of the waters of the noble freedom, thinking: "Those who have intelligence and discernment but are soiled with the stains of the defilements, bathing here, can be washed clean of all the defilements.' If someone,

going to that pond but, without washing, turns back from it and reverts to the secular life having defilements as before, the people will blame him only, saying: "Having gone forth in the Dispensation of the Conqueror but not getting a foothold there, he has reverted to the secular life. How can this Dispensation of the Conqueror itself cleanse this person who was not applying himself to it? What defect is there in the Dispensation of the Conqueror?'

"Or, sire, it is as if a man afflicted with a dire disease should visit a physician who is skilled in diagnosis and knows a lasting cure, but he does not let himself be treated and turns back still an ill man. Whom would the people blame for that, the sick man or the physician?"

"The people would blame the sick man, revered sir. How can the physician himself cure the man who does not allow himself to be treated? What defect is there in the physician?"

"Even so, sire, the Tathāgata placed in the casket of his Teaching the healing medicine of Deathlessness which wholly allays and calms illnesses due to all the defilements, thinking: "When those who are oppressed by the illnesses of the defilements but have intelligence and discernment have drunk of this healing medicine of Deathlessness, they will allay all the illnesses due to the defilements.' If someone does not drink of that curing medicine of Deathlessness but turns and reverts to the secular life having defilements as before, the people will blame him only, saying: "Having gone forth in the Dispensation of the Conqueror but not getting a foothold there, he has reverted to the secular life. How can this Dispensation of the Conqueror itself cleanse this person who was not applying himself to it? What defect is there in the Dispensation of the Conqueror?'

"Or, sire, it is as if a famished man arriving at a mighty distribution of food for merit, but not eating any of that food, should turn back famished as before, whom would the people blame for that, the famished man or the food for merit?"

"The people would blame the famished man, revered sir. How can a meal itself enter into the mouth of this man who did not eat? What defect is there in the meal?"

"Even so, sire, the Tathāgata has set in the casket of his Teaching the most precious, peaceful, auspicious, excellent, undying and utterly sweet meal of mindfulness connected with the body, thinking: "May all those who are exhausted internally

by the defilements, their minds overcome by craving, who have intelligence and discernment, dispel by eating this meal all cravings for the three becomings of the sense sphere, the fine-material sphere, and the immaterial sphere.' If someone, not partaking of that meal, turns back still clinging to craving as before and reverts to the secular life, the people would blame only him, thinking: "Having gone forth in the Dispensation of the Conqueror but not getting a foothold there, he has reverted to the secular life. But how can the Dispensation of the Conqueror itself cleanse this person who was not applying himself to it? What defect is there in the Dispensation of the Conqueror?'

"If, sire, the Tathāgata had allowed a householder to go forth only if he had attained the fruit of the first path, then this going forth is not for getting rid of defilements nor is it for purification. There is nothing to be gained by going forth. Supposing, sire, a man had had a pond dug out by several hundred workmen and were to announce to an assembly thus: "Let no one who is soiled, good sirs, go down into this pond; let only those whose dust and dirt have been already washed away, who are pure, stainless and cleansed go down into this pond.' Now, sire, would that pond be of any use to those whose dust and dirt had already been washed away, who were pure, stainless and cleansed?"

"No, revered sir, they have carried out elsewhere the purpose for which they might have come to the pond. So what is the good of that pond to them?"

"Moreover, sire, those who revert to the secular life show forth five special qualities in the Teaching. What are the five? They show forth its mighty character as a plane; they show forth its character of complete and stainless purity; they show forth its character as one of not associating with evil things; they show forth its character as one that is hard to pierce; they show forth its character as one to be preserved by many controls.

"They show forth its mighty character as a plane. It is, sire, as a man, poor, of lowly birth, undistinguished, deficient in wisdom, on acquiring a great and mighty kingdom, soon comes to naught and to ruin, decreases in fame and is not able to sustain authority. For what reason? The greatness of the authority. Even so, sire, those who are undistinguished, have not done meritorious deeds and are deficient in wisdom, but

have gone forth in the Dispensation of the Conqueror, they are incapable of sustaining that noble and incomparable going forth, and soon coming to naught and to ruin and decline, they revert from the Dispensation of the Conqueror to the secular life. For what reason? The greatness of the state of the Dispensation of the Conqueror.

"They show forth its character of complete and stainless purity. It is, sire, as water on a lotus leaf disperses, scatters, disappears and does not adhere to it. For what reason? The completely stainless purity of the lotus. Even so, sire, those who are treacherous, deceitful, shifty, crooked and of discrepant views, but have gone forth in the Dispensation of the Conqueror, soon dispersing, dissolving and scattering from the completely pure, stainless, uninimical, bright, noble, and precious Dispensation, and not remaining in it, not adhering to it, revert to the secular life. For what reason? The complete stainless purity of the Dispensation of the Conqueror.

"They show forth its character as one of not associating with evil things. As, sire, the great ocean does not associate with a dead body, but whatever dead body there may be in the great ocean, it quickly carries to the shore or pushes on to dry land. For what reason? Because the great ocean is the abode of great beings. Even so, sire, those who are evil, inactive, with energy exhausted, rotten, soiled and bad, but have gone forth in the Dispensation of the Conqueror, soon departing from the abode of the stainless arahats, great beings whose cankers are destroyed, not associating with them, revert to the secular life. For what reason? Because the Dispensation of the Conqueror does not associate with evil things.

"They show forth its character as one that is hard to pierce. It is, sire, as those archers who are not clever, untrained, not learned in the craft, and with their thoughts wandering, are incapable of piercing the tip of a hair, fall short of the target and depart. For what reason? Because the tip of a hair, being delicate and fine, is very difficult to pierce. Even so, sire, those who are weak in wisdom, stupid, dull, confused and slothful, if they go forth in the Dispensation of the Conqueror, being incapable of piercing the Four Noble Truths that are of the utmost delicacy and fineness, then falling short of the target and departing from the Dispensation of the Conqueror, they soon revert to the secular life. For what reason? Because of the

difficulty of piercing the Four Noble Truths which are of the utmost delicacy and fineness.

"They show forth its character as one to be preserved by many controls. It is, sire, as a man who has arrived at the scene of a great and mighty battle and is surrounded on all sides by the opposing army, on seeing the troops closing in on him with weapons in their hands, is terrified, hesitates, turns tail and runs away. For what reason? For fear of not preserving his life in such a tumultuous battle. Even so, sire, if those foolish people, evil-doers, uncontrolled, without shame, unwise, impatient, wavering, unsteady, unstable, go forth in the Dispensation of the Conqueror, but are incapable of preserving the many rules of training, then turning tail and running away, they soon revert to the secular life. For what reason? Because the character of the Dispensation of the Conqueror is one to be preserved by many controls.

"The flowers, sire, on even the best of shrubs growing on dry land, the double-jasmine, are sometimes eaten through by insects so that the shrivelled shoots among them come to naught. But a double-jasmine shrub is not despised because these come to naught. The flowers that remain on it pervade every quarter with their true perfume. Even so, sire, those who revert to the secular life after they have gone forth in the Dispensation of the Conqueror are like the double-jasmine flowers that have been eaten by insects and, deprived of their colour and perfume, their morality being as it were colourless, are not capable of maturing. But the Dispensation of the Conqueror is not despised because of the reversion of these to the secular life. Those monks that remain there pervade the world with the devas with the lovely perfume of moral habit."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena. By one fitting simile after another, by one appropriate reason after another, you have made me understand the blameless Dispensation of the Conqueror and have illumined it with a character that is of the very best, for even those reversions to the secular life illumine the character of the Dispensation of the Conqueror as of the very best."

25. Arahats and the Body (VI,7)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, you say: 'An arahat feels one kind of feeling: the bodily, not the mental.'[129] Now, revered Nāgasena, is it that an arahat's mind proceeds in

dependence on the body, but that the arahat is without authority, powerless and not able to exercise mastery as to that body?"

"Yes, sire."

"That is not proper, revered Nāgasena, that while his body is proceeding he is without authority, powerless and not able to exercise mastery over his own body. Even a bird, revered sir, has authority, power and exercises mastery in the nest in which it dwells."

"These ten qualities, sire, accompanying the body, follow it and keep on going with it from existence to existence. What are the ten? Cold and heat, hunger and thirst, the necessity for voiding excreta and urine, fatigue-and-sleepiness, old age, disease and death. The arahat is without authority, powerless and not able to exercise mastery in these respects."

"Revered Nāgasena, for what reason does neither a command nor authority proceed to an arahat's body? Tell me the reason for this."

"It is, sire, as those beings who are dependent on the earth all move and live and order their conduct in dependence on it. But, sire, does either a command of theirs or their authority proceed to the earth?"

"No, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, the mind of an arahat proceeds in dependence on his body, but neither the command of an arahat nor his authority proceeds to the body."

"Revered Nāgasena, for what reason does an ordinary person feel a bodily and mental feeling?"

"It is because of the lack of development of his mind, sire, that an ordinary person feels a bodily and a mental feeling. As, sire, an ox trembling with starvation might be tied up with a weak, fragile and tiny rope of grass or creepers, but when that ox gets excited then it would make off with the fastenings. Even so, sire, a feeling that arises in one whose mind is undeveloped excites the mind; when his mind is excited he bends his body, contorts it and makes it roll about; he then howls and yells and cries aloud in dread and distress."

"But what is the reason, revered sir, that an arahat experiences the one feeling, the bodily, not the mental?"

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129. See Part II, §16 and note 41 on page 44. It is clear from what follows that here too painful feeling alone is intended.

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"The arahat's mind, sire, is developed, well developed, it is tamed, well tamed, it is docile and obedient. On his being assailed by a painful feeling he grasps it firmly thinking that it is not permanent. He fastens his mind to the post of concentration, and when his mind is fastened to the post of concentration it does not quiver or shake, but is steadfast and composed, although his body, owing to the diffusion of the perturbation of the feeling, bends, contorts itself and rolls about."

"Revered Nāgasena, this is indeed a wonder in the world that when the body is shaking the mind does not shake. Tell me the reason for that."

"Suppose, sire, there were a great and mighty tree, with a full complement of trunk, branches and leaves. Its branches shake when struck by the force of the wind. But does its trunk shake too?"

"No, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, an arahat, on being assailed by a painful feeling, grasps it firmly thinking that it is not permanent; he fastens his mind to the post of concentration, and when his mind is fastened to the post of concentration it does not quiver or shake, but is steadfast and composed, although the body, owing to the diffusion of the perturbation of the feeling, bends, contorts itself and rolls about. But his mind does not quiver or shake. It is like the trunk of the great tree."

"It is wonderful, revered Nāgasena, it is marvellous. I have never before seen the lamp of the Dhamma burning like this for all time."

26. If a Householder Attains Arahatship (VII,2)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, you say: "There are two bourns, not another, for a householder who has attained arahatship: either, that very day, he goes forth into homelessness or he attains final Nibbāna. That day is not able to pass without one or other of these events taking place.'[130] If, revered Nāgasena, he could not, on that day, procure a teacher or a preceptor or a bowl and a set of robes, could he go forth of himself or could he let the day pass? Or if some other arahat of psychic power arrived could he let him go forth? Or would he attain final Nibbāna?"

"An arahat, sire, could not go forth of himself. On going forth of oneself one falls into theft.[131] Nor could he let the day pass.

Whether another arahat arrived or not, he would attain final Nibbāna that very day."

"Well then, revered Nāgasena, the peaceful state of arahatship is given up if the life of him who attains it in this manner is carried away."

"Unequal, sire, are the attributes of a householder. The attributes being unequal, it is owing to the weakness of his attributes that a householder who has attained arahatship either goes forth or attains final Nibbāna on that very day. This is not a defect in arahatship, sire, this is a defect in the householder's attributes, namely, the weakness of the attributes. It is like food that guards the lifespan and protects the life of all beings, yet carries away the life of him whose stomach is out of order because the food is not properly digested. This is not a defect in the food, this is a defect in the stomach. Or, sire, as a man who is feeble and weak, of lowly birth and of little merit, comes to naught and to ruin the moment he has acquired a great and mighty kingdom, falters and is unable to sustain authority, even so, sire, the householder who has attained arahatship is unable to sustain arahatship because of that attribute of weakness, and for that reason he either goes forth or attains final Nibbāna on that very day."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

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130. This statement is not found as such in the canonical texts, but the idea it expresses seems to be based on the few instances recorded in the Suttas of lay persons attaining arahatship. In such cases the lay person either immediately seeks admission into the Order, as in the case of Yasa (Vin I 17) or is a householder on the verge of death, as in the case mentioned at S V 410. A famous passage at A III 450–51 is often held to provide evidence for lay persons attaining arahatship and continuing to remain as householders, but such an interpretation is erroneous, based on mistaking the expression *niṭṭhaṅgata* to mean "attained the goal," when it actually means "attained to certainty" and signifies a stream-enterer or one at some other grade of noble attainment short of arahatship.

131. This is called *theyyaliṅga*, theft consisting in making use of the requisites of a monk without proper ordination.

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27. The Faults of an Arahat (VII,3)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, can an arahat be devoid of mindfulness?"

"Arahats, sire, have put lack of mindfulness far from them. They are never devoid of mindfulness."

"But, revered sir, can an arahat fall into an offence?"

"Yes, sire."

"On what kind of matter?"

"In the building of his hut, in acting as a go-between, in imagining it is the right time for a meal when it is the wrong time, in imagining that he has not been invited to a meal when he has been invited, in imagining that the food that has not been left over has been left over."[132]

"Revered Nāgasena, you say that those who commit offences do so from one of two reasons: out of disrespect or out of ignorance. Now, revered sir, is the arahat disrespectful?"

"No, sire."

"Then, revered sir, the arahat must be capable of lack of mindfulness."

"The arahat, sire, is not capable of lack of mindfulness, yet he may be guilty of offences."

"Convince me then, revered sir, by a reason. What is the reason for this?"

"There are two kinds of defilements, sire: that which is a breach of the ordinary moral law, and that which is a breach of the rules of the Order. What, sire, is a breach of the ordinary moral law? The ten ways of unwholesome action.[133] What is a

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132. The allusions are to the following disciplinary rules: Saṅghādisesa 6 (constructing a hut exceeding the proper dimensions and without consulting the Sangha); Saṅghādisesa 5 (acting to arrange a meeting between a man and a woman in regard to marriage or sexual relations); Pācittiya 37 (eating solid food between noon and the following dawn); Pācittiya 35 (eating food offered by one donor after having refused food offered by another donor); and Pācittiya 35 again (eating food that has not been left over by a bhikkhu under the impression that it has been left over). In the case of an arahat, these transgressions would be committed due to lack of knowledge of the situation, not through deliberate disregard for the rule.

133. Ten ways of unwholesome action: killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slander, harsh speech, gossip, covetousness, ill will and wrong view.

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breach of the rules of the Order? Whatever in the world is unfitting and unbecoming for recluses, but is not blameable in householders. The Blessed One laid down rules of training for his disciples not to be transgressed as long as their lives last. Eating at the wrong time, injuring trees and shrubs, sporting in the water and many other things of a similar kind are blameless in householders but are blameable in the Dispensation of the Conqueror. One whose cankers are destroyed is not capable of a breach of the ordinary moral law but, without knowing it, he may be guilty of an offence against the rules of the Order. It is not within the range of every arahat to know everything, sire; indeed he has no power to know everything. The name and the clan of a woman or man, sire, may not be known to an arahat and he may not know about some road on the earth. But every arahat, sire, would know about emancipation. The arahat possessed of the six super-knowledges would know about his own range.[134] Only an omniscient Tathāgata, sire, knows everything."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

28. What There Is Nothing of in the World (VII,4)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, tell me what there is that is not found in the world."

"These three, sire, are not found in the world. What three? That which, whether it is cognizant or incognizsant, does not age and die—that is not found in the world. There is no permanence of formations. And in the ultimate sense there is no being to be found.[135] These three, sire, are not in the world."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

134. The six super-knowledges (*abhiññā*): psychic powers, divine ear, penetration of others' minds, recollection of former existences, divine eye, destruction of the cankers. Not every arahat is accomplished in all of these, though destruction of the cankers is universal to arahatship.

135. *Paramatthena satt'ūpaladdhi natthi.* See Part II, §1 and notes note 24 on page 28 and note 29 on page 31.

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29. What Is Not Born of a Cause? (VII,5)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, things produced by kamma are seen in the world, things produced by cause, things produced by physical change are seen. Tell me what there is in the world that is not born of kamma, not born of cause, not born of physical change."

"In the world these two, sire, are born neither of kamma nor of cause nor of physical change. What two? Space and Nibbāna."[136]

"Do not, revered Nāgasena, bring the Conqueror's words into contempt, do not answer the question ignorantly."

"But what have I said, sire, that you speak thus to me?"

"Revered Nāgasena, what you say about space is right. But in many a hundred ways the Blessed One pointed out to disciples the way to the realization of Nibbāna, and yet you say that Nibbāna is not born of cause."

"It is true, sire, that in many a hundred ways the Blessed One pointed out to disciples the way to the realization of Nibbāna; but he did not point out a cause for the arising of Nibbāna."

"Here, revered Nāgasena, we are entering from darkness to greater darkness, from a forest into a deeper forest, from a thicket into a denser thicket, inasmuch as there is indeed a cause for the realization of Nibbāna, though there is no cause from which it can arise. If, revered Nāgasena, there be a cause for the realization of Nibbāna, well then, one would require a cause also for the arising of Nibbāna. Inasmuch, revered Nāgasena, as there is a father of a child, for that reason one would also require a father of the father; inasmuch as there is a seed for a sprout, for that reason one would require also a seed for the seed. Even so, revered Nāgasena, if there is a cause for the realization of Nibbāna, for that reason one would require a cause also for the arising of Nibbāna."

"Nibbāna, sire, is unarisable, therefore a cause for the arising of Nibbāna has not been pointed out."

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136. The notion that space (*ākāsa*) is not born of a cause appears to approach the Sarvāstivādin tenet that both Nirvāna and space are unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*). Though the *Milinda* may reflect this influence, it stops short of ascribing this status to space, specifying Nibbāna alone as unconditioned.

"Please, revered Nāgasena, give me a reason, convince me by the reason so that I may know how it is that while there is a cause for the realization of Nibbāna, there is no cause for the arising of Nibbāna."

"Well then, sire, lend an attentive ear, listen closely and I will tell you the reason for this. Would a man, sire, with his natural strength, go up from here to the Himalaya, king of the mountains?"

"Yes, revered sir."

"But would that man, sire, with his natural strength, be able to bring the Himalaya, king of the mountains, here?"

"No, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, it is possible to point out the way for the realization of Nibbāna, but impossible to show a cause for the arising of Nibbāna. For what reason? Because it is unconditioned."

"Revered Nāgasena, is Nibbāna unconditioned?"

"Yes, sire, Nibbāna is unconditioned. It is made by nothing. One cannot say of Nibbāna that it has arisen, or that it has not arisen, or that it is arisable, or that it is past or future or present, or that it is cognizable by the eye or the ear or the nose or the tongue or the body."

"Well then, revered sir, you indicate Nibbāna as what is not."

"Nibbāna, sire, is. Nibbāna is cognizable by the mind. A noble disciple, practising rightly, with a mind that is purified, lofty, straight, without obstructions, without temporal desires, sees Nibbāna."

"But, revered sir, what is this Nibbāna like? Convince me by reasons, how the fact of its existence can be illustrated by similes."

"Is there, sire, what is called wind?"

"Yes, revered sir."

"Please, sire, show the wind by its colour or configuration or whether it is thin or thick, long or short."

"It is not possible, revered Nāgasena, for the wind to be shown. It does not lend itself to being grasped by the hands or to being touched. But yet it exists all the same."

"If it is not possible, sire, for the wind to be shown, well then there can't be such a thing."

"I know, revered Nāgasena, that there is wind, I am convinced of it, but I am not able to point out the wind."

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"Even so, sire, Nibbāna is, though it is not possible to point out Nibbāna either by colour or configuration."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena. Well pointed out is the simile, well expressed the argument. Thus it is, therefore do I accept it. There is Nibbāna."

30. The Transference of Merit (VIII,4)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, these givers, when they bestow their offerings, devote (the merits) specifically to former relatives now departed, thinking: "May this gift benefit such and such.'[137] Now do the dead derive any benefit from them?"

"Some do, sire, and some do not."

"Which then are they that do, revered sir, and which do not?"

"Those who have been reborn in hell, sire, do not; nor those reborn in heaven; nor those reborn as animals. Of those four classes reborn as petas, three classes do not: those who feed on vomit, those who are tormented by hunger and thirst, and those who are consumed by craving. The fourth class that lives on the gifts of others do derive benefit and those who remember them obtain it too."

"Well then, revered Nāgasena, the offerings given by givers are wasted and are fruitless, since those for whose benefit they are given receive no profit from them."

"No, sire, the offerings are not wasted nor are they fruitless. The givers themselves derive profit from them."

"Well then, revered sir, convince me by a reason."

"Suppose, sire, some people, after preparing fish, meat, strong drinks, rice and other kinds of food, go to a relations' house. If those relations were not to accept that present, would it go to waste and be lost?"

"No, revered sir, it would be for the owners themselves."

137. It is a common practice in Buddhist countries for people to dedicate the merit from their good deeds to deceased relatives, inviting them to share the merit. The petas are a class of beings in the bad destinations. The sub-group which can receive the merits is called *paradattūpajīvī peta*. The "transference of merit" is discussed at A V 269–71 and in the commentary to the Tirokuḍḍa Sutta (Khp-a 201ff.). See Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, trans. *Minor Readings and Illustrator* (PTS 1960), pp. 223ff.

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"Even so, sire, it is the givers themselves who experience the fruit of their gifts."

"Let that be, revered Nāgasena, that is so and I accept it as you say. We will not dispute your reason. But if the offerings made by such givers benefit certain of the departed and they do reap the results of the gifts, then if a man who destroys living creatures, is bloody-handed, and is of corrupt mind and purpose were, after committing murder or any other dreadful act, to dedicate it to the departed, thinking: "May the result of this act of mine accrue to the departed'—would it then be transferred to them?"

"No, sire."

"Revered Nāgasena, what is the cause, what is the reason that a good deed can accrue to them and not an evil one?"

"This is really not a question you should ask, sire. Do not ask a foolish question thinking that an answer will be forthcoming. You will be asking me next why space is boundless, why the Ganges does not flow upstream, why men and birds are bipeds and why beasts are quadrupeds."

"I do not ask this seeking to annoy you, revered Nāgasena. I ask for the sake of removing a doubt. There are many people in the world who have gone astray and are spiritually blind. I put that question to you, thinking, "How can these not get an opportunity (to do evil)?'"

"It is not possible, sire, to share an evil deed with one who has not done it, not consented to it. As, sire, it is possible to light a lamp with oil, yet is it possible to light a lamp with water?"

"No, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, a good deed can be shared but not an evil one."

"What is the reason, revered Nāgasena, that a good deed can be shared but not an evil one? Convince me by a reason. I am not blind, not without light. When I have heard you I will know."

"An evil deed is slight, sire, a good deed is abundant. Because of its slightness evil affects only the doer; because of its abundance good spreads over the world of devas and men."

"Make a simile."

"It is as, sire, one small drop of water might fall on the earth, yet would that drop of water, sire, spread out over ten or twelve leagues?"

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"No, revered sir; where that drop of water has fallen there only does it affect."

"For what reason, sire?"

"Because of the slightness of the drop of water, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, an evil deed is slight; because of its slightness it affects only the doer; it is not possible to share it. But as, sire, a mighty and great cloud were to pour down rain satisfying the earth's surface, yet would the water from that great cloud, spread out all round?"

"Certainly, revered sir."

"For what reason, sire?"

"Because of the greatness of the cloud, revered sir."

"Even so, sire, a good deed is abundant; because of its abundance one is able to share it even with devas and mankind."

"What is the reason, revered sir, that evil is slight and good is abundant?"

"As to this, sire, whoever gives a gift, undertakes moral precepts, carries out the formal acts of the Observances, is happy, cheerful, pleased, merry, greatly delighted, glad in mind and filled with joy; rapture arises in him again and again; to one who has a mind of rapture good increases more and more. As from one side, sire, water may enter a well that is already full and flow away from another, yet even though it is flowing away water increases again and again in the well and it is not possible to exhaust it—even so, sire, good increases more and more. And if for a hundred years, sire, a man were to advert to the good he had done, then while he is repeatedly adverting to it the good increases more and more and it is possible for him to share that good with whomever he likes. This is a reason according to which, sire, good is abundant. But, sire, the person doing evil is remorseful later; the mind of him who is remorseful retreats, retracts, recoils and is not stretched out; he grieves, is consumed by remorse, wastes away, is exhausted; he does not prosper; he is affected then and there. As, sire, a little drop of water falling on a dry river bed with its great sandbanks rising and falling in curves and twists, wastes away and is exhausted—even so, sire, the mind of a person doing evil retreats, retracts, recoils and is not stretched out; he grieves, is consumed by remorse, wastes away, is exhausted; he does not prosper, he is affected then and there. This is a reason according to which, sire, evil is slight."

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"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

31. Dreams (VIII,5)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, men and women in this world see dreams pleasant and evil, things they have seen before and things they have not seen before, things they have done before and things they have not done before, dreams peaceful and terrible, dreams of matters near to them and distant from them, full of many shapes and innumerable colours. What is this that men call a dream, and who is it who dreams it?"

"This that is called a dream, sire, is a suggestion that comes into the focus of the mind. There are six kinds of people who see dreams: the person who suffers from wind, the bilious person, the phlegmatic person, the person possessed of a deva, the person influenced by his own habits, and the person who sees a dream as a portent. Among these, sire, only the last kind is true, the rest are false."

"Revered Nāgasena, in regard to him who sees a dream as a portent, does his mind, going along of its own accord, seek for that portent, or does that portent come into the focus of the mind, or does anyone else come and tell him of it?"

"It is not, sire, that his mind, going along of its own accord, seeks for that portent, nor does anyone else come and tell him of it, but that very portent comes into the focus of his mind. It is like a mirror that does not go anywhere to seek for a reflection, nor does anyone else bringing a reflection put it on the mirror, but from wherever the reflection comes it appears in the mirror."

"Revered Nāgasena, does the mind that sees a dream also know, "Thus will be the result: peaceful or frightening'?"

"No, sire, that is not so. When the portent has arisen, he speaks to others about it and they then speak to him of its meaning."

"Please give me a simile to explain this, revered Nāgasena."

"It is, sire, as the moles or boils or itches that arise on a man's body are to his gain or loss, his repute or disrepute, to his praise or blame, to his happiness or sorrow. But as these boils arise, sire, do they know: "We will bring about such and such an event'?"

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"No, revered sir. But according to the place where these boils occur, so do the fortune-tellers, seeing them there, explain, "Such indeed will be the result.'"

"Even so, sire, the mind that sees the dream does not know, "Thus will be the result: peaceful or frightening.' But when the portent has arisen, he speaks to others about it and they then speak to him of its meaning."

"Revered Nāgasena, does he who sees a dream see it when he is awake or asleep?"

"Neither the one, sire, nor yet the other. It is in the interval between being drowsy and not having yet reached the unconscious state[138] that one sees a dream. When a man is drowsy his mind is entering the unconscious state; a mind that is entering the unconscious state does not function; a mind that is not functioning is not susceptible to happiness or suffering. There is no dream for one who is not susceptible. When the mind is functioning it sees a dream. As, sire, in dense darkness where there is no light, no shadow can be seen on even a well-burnished mirror, even so, sire, a mind that has entered the unconscious state is not functioning though it is in the physical frame. A mind that is not functioning does not see a dream. As the mirror, sire, so should the physical frame be understood, as the darkness sleep, as the light the mind.

"In two circumstances, sire, the mind is not functioning though the physical frame exists: when the mind has entered the unconscious state and when the mind has attained cessation.[139] When a man is awake, sire, his mind is astir, open, natural, untramelled. A portent does not come into the focus of such a mind. As, sire, those desiring secrecy avoid the man who is open, natural, unwise and unreserved, even so, sire, the deva-like purpose of the portent does not come into focus for one who is awake. Or as, sire, the wholesome states that are helpful to enlightenment do not come into focus for a monk whose way of living is torn, who indulges in bad habits, is evil, poor in morality, idle and low in energy, even so, sire, the deva-like purpose of the portent does not come into focus for one who is awake. Therefore he who is awake does not see a dream."

138. *Bhavaṅga*: the passive stream of the life-continuum, below the threshold of awareness. The term becomes prominent in the Abhidhamma literature.

139. On cessation, see note 16 on page 17.

"Revered Nāgasena, is there a beginning, a middle and an end in sleep?"

"Yes, sire, there is."

"Which then is the beginning, which the middle and which the end?"

"The feeling of oppression and inability in the body, sire, of weakness, slackness and inertness—that is the beginning of sleep. The light "monkey-sleep' when one lies half awake, half asleep—that is the middle of sleep. When the mind has gone into the unconscious state—that is the end of sleep. It is when one has reached the middle stage, sire, that one sees a dream. As, sire, someone living with self-restraint, composed in mind, steadfast as to the mental object, his discernment unshaken, goes into a wood that is rid of tumult and noise and thinks over some subtle matter and, without falling asleep but with the mind one-pointed, penetrates that subtle matter, even so, sire, it is one who has entered the light "monkey-sleep' that sees a dream. As, sire, the tumult and noise, so should wakefulness be understood; as the secluded wood so should the "monkey-sleep' be understood; and as that man who, leaving behind the tumult and noise and avoiding sleep and being one of balanced mind, penetrates that subtle matter, even so the still watchful man, not fallen into sleep but dozing in a "monkey-sleep,' sees a dream."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

32. Nibbāna is Entirely Blissful (VIII,9)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, is Nibbāna entirely blissful or is it mixed with suffering?"

"Nibbāna is entirely blissful, sire, it is unmixed with suffering."

"Revered Nāgasena, we do not believe this statement that Nibbāna is entirely blissful. We thus take our stand on this, revered Nāgasena, that Nibbāna is mixed with suffering and we have a reason for saying this. Revered Nāgasena, mortification and tormenting of body and mind is evident in those who are seeking Nibbāna, whether it be in their standing, pacing up and down, sitting, lying down, abstention from food, the checking of drowsiness, the subjugation of the sense fields, the getting rid of wealth and corn, of dear relatives and friends. But all those who are happy and blissful in the world indulge

in and devote themselves to the sense fields by means of the five strands of sense pleasures: they indulge in and devote themselves to vision by means of all kinds of pleasant forms, to hearing by means of all kinds of pleasant sounds, to smelling by means of all kinds of pleasant scents, to tasting by means of all kinds of pleasant tastes, to the body by means of all kinds of pleasant touches, and to the mind by means of attention to all kinds of pleasant thoughts. But you destroy and reduce, cut off and interrupt, stop and hinder this devoting of themselves to the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Therefore the body is tormented and the mind is tormented too. When the body is tormented one experiences a painful bodily feeling; when the mind is tormented one experiences a painful mental feeling. Now did not the wanderer Māgandiya too, when he was finding fault with the Blessed One, speak thus: "A destroyer of beings is the recluse Gotama'?[140] This is the reason on account of which I say that Nibbāna is mixed with suffering."

"Nibbāna is not mixed with suffering, sire; Nibbāna is entirely blissful. But when you said, sire, that Nibbāna is suffering, this suffering is not called Nibbāna, but is a preliminary stage for the realization of Nibbāna, it is the quest for Nibbāna. Nibbāna itself is entirely blissful, sire, it is not mixed with suffering. I shall tell you the reason for that. Is there, sire, what is called the bliss of sovereignty among kings?"

"Yes, revered Nāgasena."

"Is this bliss of sovereignty mixed with suffering, sire?"

"No, revered sir."

"Then why is it, sire, that in a border disturbance kings, for the re-subjugation of those living in the border districts, set out on an expedition surrounded by their ministers, advisers, hirelings and armed forces, and hard pressed by gnats and mosquitoes, wind and sun, march over even and uneven ground and engage in a great battle and jeopardize their lives?"

"This, revered Nāgasena, is not called the bliss of sovereignty. This is the preliminary stage in the quest for the bliss of sovereignty. After kings have sought sovereignty with suffering, revered Nāgasena, they experience the bliss of sovereignty. Thus, revered Nāgasena, the bliss of sovereignty is unmixed

140. *Bhūtahacca*. The reading at M I 502, to which this quotation refers, is *bhūnahu*, which Horner has translated "destroyer of growth."

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with suffering. That bliss of sovereignty is one thing, suffering is another."

"Even so, sire, Nibbāna is entirely blissful and is not mixed with suffering. It is after those who seek for this Nibbāna have mortified their bodies and minds, whether it be in their standing, pacing up and down, sitting, lying down, have abstained from food, checked drowsiness, subjugated the sense fields, rejected their body and life-principle and with suffering have sought Nibbāna that they experience Nibbāna which is entirely blissful, as kings experience the bliss of sovereignty when their adversaries have been quelled. Thus, sire, Nibbāna is entirely blissful and is not mixed with suffering. Nibbāna is one thing, suffering is another."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

33. Nibbāna is without a Counterpart (VIII,10)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, you keep on talking about Nibbāna, but is it possible by simile or argument or cause or method to point out the shape or configuration or age or size of this Nibbāna?"

"Without a counterpart, sire, is Nibbāna, and it is not possible by simile or argument or cause or method to point out the shape or configuration or age or size of Nibbāna."

"But, revered Nāgasena, I do not agree to this not laying down by simile or argument or cause or method the shape or configuration or age or size of Nibbāna, which is a thing that exists. Convince me by a reason."

"Let it be, sire, I will convince you of this by a reason. Is there, sire, what is called the great ocean?"

"Yes, revered sir, there is this great ocean."

"But if someone asked you, sire, how much water was in the great ocean or how many beings live in the great ocean, would you, sire, on being questioned thus be able to answer him?"

"No, revered sir, I would not be able to answer these questions and I would tell him: "My good man, these are not questions to be asked by anyone. They are to be put aside. The great ocean has not been analysed by natural scientists and it is not possible to estimate the amount of water in the great ocean or the number of beings living there.' Thus would I, revered sir, make reply to him."

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"But why would you, sire, make such a reply about the great ocean, which is a reality? Should you not, having counted, tell him that there is so much water and so many beings living in the great ocean?"

"It is not possible, revered sir. This is a question beyond one's scope."

"In the same way, sire, it is not possible by simile or argument or cause or method to point out the shape or configuration or age or size of Nibbāna, which is a reality. Even if a man of psychic power, sire, one who had attained to mastery over his mind, were to determine how much water was in the great ocean and how many beings live there, even such a man, sire, will not be able by simile or argument or cause or method to point out the shape or configuration or age or size of Nibbāna."

"Let that be, revered Nāgasena. Is there any special quality of Nibbāna present in other things that can be demonstrated by a simile?"

"There is nothing to be shown by what has shape, sire, but from a special quality it is possible to point out something that can be demonstrated by a simile."

"Good it is, revered Nāgasena. Speak quickly so that I may receive an illustration of even one mark of Nibbāna from a special quality. Allay the fever of my heart, dispel it by the sweet, cool breezes of your words."

"One special quality of a lotus is present in Nibbāna: as a lotus is unsoiled by water, so is Nibbāna unsoiled by any defilement.

"Two special qualities of water are present in Nibbāna: as water which is cool is the means of allaying fever, so Nibbāna, which is cool, is the means of allaying all the defilements; and as water is the means of quenching thirst, so Nibbāna is the means of quenching the thirst of craving.

"Three special qualities of an antidote are present in Nibbāna: as an antidote is the mainstay of beings afflicted by poisons, so Nibbāna is the mainstay of beings afflicted by the poison of the defilements; and as an antidote makes an end of diseases, so Nibbāna makes an end of all suffering; and as an antidote is nectar, so is Nibbāna nectar.[141]

141. There is a word-play here: the Pali word *amata* means both nectar or ambrosia, the drink of the gods, and the Deathless.

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"Four special qualities of the great ocean are present in Nibbāna: as the great ocean is empty of all corpses, so is Nibbāna empty of the corpses of all the defilements; and as the great ocean is great and unbounded and is not filled by all the rivers that flow into it, so is Nibbāna great and unbounded and is not filled by all the beings who attain it; and as the great ocean is the abode of great beings, so is Nibbāna the abode of arahats, great beings who are stainless, their cankers destroyed, who have attained the powers and become masters over their minds; and as the great ocean is flowering with the unnumbered, various and abundant flowers of the waves, so is Nibbāna flowering with the unnumbered, various, abundant and quite pure flowers of knowledge and emancipation.

"Five special qualities of food are present in Nibbāna: as food is the sustainer of the lifespan of all beings, so is Nibbāna, when it is realized, the sustainer of the lifespan by driving out old age and death; and as food is the augmenter of the strength of all beings, so is Nibbāna, when it is realized, the augmenter of the psychic power of all beings; and as food is the producer of beauty in all beings, so is Nibbāna, when it is realized, the producer of special qualities in all beings; and as food is the calmer of distress in all beings, so is Nibbāna, when it is realized, the calmer of the distress of all the defilements in all beings; and as food is the remover of the weakness of exhaustion in all beings, so is Nibbāna, when it is realized, the remover of the weakness of exhaustion in all beings due to all their suffering.

"Ten special qualities of space are present in Nibbāna: as space is not born, does not age, does not decease here, does not arise elsewhere, is hard to master, cannot be carried off by thieves, depends on nothing, is the sphere of birds, is without obstruction and is unending, so Nibbāna is not born, does not age, does not decease, does not arise, is hard to master, cannot be carried off by thieves, depends on nothing, is the sphere of noble ones, is without obstruction and is unending.

"Three special qualities of a precious gem are present in Nibbāna: as a precious gem is the granter of desires, so is Nibbāna the granter of desires; and as a precious gem causes delight, so does Nibbāna cause delight; and as a precious gem is rich in lustre, so is Nibbāna rich in lustre.

"Three special qualities of red sandalwood are present in Nibbāna: as red sandalwood is hard to obtain, so is Nibbāna

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hard to obtain; and as red sandalwood is unequalled for its lovely scent, so is Nibbāna unequalled for its lovely scent; and as red sandalwood is praised by good men, so is Nibbāna praised by the noble ones.

"Three special qualities of ghee are present in Nibbāna: as the cream of ghee has colour, so has Nibbāna the colour of special qualities; and as the cream of ghee has scent, so has Nibbāna the scent of morality; and as the cream of ghee has flavour, so has Nibbāna the flavour of deathlessness.

"Five special qualities of a mountain-peak are present in Nibbāna: as a mountain-peak is lofty, so is Nibbāna lofty; and as a mountain-peak is immovable, so is Nibbāna immovable; and as a mountain-peak is hard to scale, so is Nibbāna hard to scale by all the defilements; and as no seeds can take root on a mountain-peak, so no defilements can take root in Nibbāna; and as a mountain-peak is free from approval and repugnance, so is Nibbāna free from approval and repugnance."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

34. Is There This Element of Nibbāna? (VIII,11)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, you say: "Nibbāna is not past, not future, not present, it has not arisen, it has not not-arisen, it is not arisable.' As to this, revered Nāgasena, when anyone who is practising rightly realizes Nibbāna, does he realize it as it is arising or after he has made it arise?"

"Whoever, sire, practising rightly, realizes Nibbāna does not realize it as it is arising nor does he realize it after he has made it arise. On the other hand, sire, there is this element of Nibbāna that he who is practising rightly realizes."

"Do not, revered Nāgasena, illumine this question by concealing it; illumine it by making it open and obvious. With ardour and zeal pour out all that you have learnt about it; people are confused about it, bewildered, fallen into doubt. Break this dart of inner defect."

"There is this element of Nibbāna, sire, peaceful, happy, excellent. It is that which he who is practising rightly, comprehending the formations in accordance with the instruction of the Conquerors, realizes by means of wisdom. As a pupil, sire, in accordance with the instruction of his teacher realizes a science through wisdom, even so, sire, he who is practising

rightly in accordance with the instruction of the Conquerors, realizes Nibbāna by means of wisdom.

"But how is Nibbāna to be understood? It is to be understood as being without adversity, without accident, without fear, as secure, peaceful, happy, joyful, excellent, pure, cool. As if, sire, a man were burning in a blazing scorching fire heaped with many faggots, but on getting free from there with effort and entering a place where there was no fire he would obtain the highest happiness there—even so, sire, does he who is practising rightly realize by means of proper attention the highest happiness, Nibbāna, the torture of the threefold fire departed.[142] As the fire, sire, so is the threefold fire to be understood. As the man in the fire, so is he who is practising rightly to be understood. As the place where there is no fire, so is Nibbāna to be understood.

"Or, sire, as if a man were on a filthy heap of corpses of snakes, dogs and men, and he were entangled in the matted hair of the corpses, but on getting free from there with an effort and entering a place where there were no corpses he would obtain the highest happiness there—even so, sire, does he who is practising rightly realize by means of proper attention the highest happiness, Nibbāna, the corpses of the defilements departed. As the corpses, sire, so are the five strands of sense pleasures to be understood. As the man among the corpses, so is he who is practising rightly to be understood. As the place where there are no corpses, so is Nibbāna to be understood.

"Or, sire, as if a man were afraid, terrified and shaking and confused in mind, but on getting free from there with effort and entering a steady, firm and unmoving place he would obtain the highest happiness there—even so, sire, does he who is practising rightly realize by means of proper attention the highest happiness, Nibbāna, fear and terror departed. As the fear, sire, so is the fear of repeated birth, ageing, disease and death to be considered. As the man who is afraid, so is he who is practising rightly to be understood. As the place where there is no fear, so is Nibbāna to be understood.

"Or, sire, as if a man had fallen in a place that was filthy and dirty with mud and slime but on getting rid of the mud and slime and going to an absolutely pure and stainless place he would obtain the highest happiness there—even so, sire, does he who is practising rightly realize by means of proper attention

142. The threefold fire is the fire of greed, hatred and delusion.

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the highest happiness, Nibbāna, the mud and slime of the defilements departed. As the mud, sire, so are gains, honour, fame to be understood. As the man who is in the mud, so is he who is practising rightly to be understood. As the absolutely pure and stainless place, so is Nibbāna to be understood.

"But if you should ask me how he who is practising rightly realizes that Nibbāna, I should reply: He who is practising rightly comprehends the occurrence of formations; on comprehending their occurrence he sees birth there, he sees ageing, he sees disease, he sees death; he does not see anything there that is happiness or joy; he does not see anything, in the beginning, in the middle or at the end, to be taken hold of there. It is like a man not finding a spot to take hold of, either at one end or in the middle or at the other end, on a glowing, scorching, red hot mass of iron. Even so, sire, whoever comprehends the occurrence of formations, sees birth, ageing, disease and death, does not see anything there that is happiness or joy and he does not see anything in the beginning, in the middle or in the end to be taken hold of there. Then discontent arises in his mind when he does not see anything to be taken hold of, a fever descends on his body and, being hopeless without a refuge or protection, he becomes repelled by all states of existence.

"When he sees the danger in the occurrence of formations he thinks thus: "This occurrence of formations is aglow, on fire, ablaze, of much suffering, of much despair. If only one could obtain the non-occurrence of formations—that is peace, that the excellent, that is to say, the tranquillizing of all formations, the casting out of all clinging, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna.' So his mind leaps forward to the non-occurrence of formations, finds satisfaction, is exultant and joyous at the thought: "I have obtained the escape.' It is like a man who chanced into unfamiliar territory and got lost, on seeing a way leading out, leaps forward, feels satisfaction and is exultant and joyous, thinking: "I have obtained a way leading out.' Even so, sire, when a man sees the danger in the occurrence of formations, his mind leaps forward to their non-occurrence, finds satisfaction and is exultant and joyous at the thought: "I have obtained the escape.' He cultivates, seeks, develops and makes much of the way for the non-occurrence of formations, his mindfulness moulds itself to that goal, his energy moulds itself to that goal, his rapture moulds itself

to that goal; by repeated attention his mind, transcending the occurrence of formations, enters on non-occurrence. If he attains the non-occurrence of formations, sire, while he is practising rightly, he is said to realize Nibbāna."

"It is good, revered Nāgasena; so it is, therefore do I accept it."

35. Where is Nibbāna? (VIII,12)

King Milinda said: "Revered Nāgasena, is there a spot to the east or the south or the west or the north, above or below or across, where Nibbāna is stored up?"

"There is no spot, sire, to the east or the south or the west or the north, above or below or across, where Nibbāna is stored up."

"If, revered Nāgasena, there is no place for the storing up of Nibbāna, well then, there is no Nibbāna, and false is the realization of those by whom this Nibbāna has been realized. I will tell you a reason for this: As there are, revered Nāgasena, on the earth fields producing crops, flowers producing scents, bushes producing flowers, trees producing fruits, mines producing gems, so that whoever wishes for this or that, on going there takes it—even so, revered Nāgasena, if there is Nibbāna, there must be a place for producing Nibbāna. But inasmuch, revered Nāgasena, as there is no place for producing Nibbāna, therefore I say there is no Nibbāna, and false is the realization of those by whom this Nibbāna is realized."

"There is no place for the storing up of Nibbāna, sire; but there is this Nibbāna, and one practising rightly realizes Nibbāna by means of proper attention. It is, sire, as there is fire, though there is no place for storing it up, and a man rubbing two sticks together obtains fire. Even so, sire, there is Nibbāna, though there is no place for storing it up, and one practising rightly realizes Nibbāna by means of proper attention."

"Revered Nāgasena, let be the place for the storing up of Nibbāna. But is there that quality steadfast in which a man who is practising rightly realizes Nibbāna?"

"Yes, sire."

"What is that quality, revered sir?"

"Morality, sire. If he is established in morality and is giving proper attention then, wherever he is, if he is steadfast and is practising rightly he realizes Nibbāna just as any man with vision, wherever he is, sees the sky."

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"It is good, revered Nāgasena; Nibbāna has been taught by you, the realization of Nibbāna has been taught, a special quality of morality has been adorned, right practice has been shown, raised aloft is the banner of Dhamma, Dhamma as a guide has been established, not barren is the right exertion of those who are well-intent. Thus it is, noble and distinguished teacher of a host of followers; therefore do I accept it."

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PART V

A Question Solved by Inference

Then King Milinda approached the Venerable Nāgasena, greeted him and sat down at a respectful distance. King Milinda, anxious to know, anxious to hear, anxious to remember, anxious to see the light of knowledge, anxious to break down the lack of knowledge, anxious to find the light of knowledge, anxious to expel the darkness of ignorance, aroused extreme steadfastness and zeal and mindfulness and clear consciousness, and spoke thus to the Venerable Nāgasena: "Revered Nāgasena, have you ever seen the Buddha?"

"No, sire."

"But have your teachers ever seen the Buddha?"

"No, sire."

"Revered Nāgasena, if you have never seen the Buddha, and if your teachers have never seen the Buddha, well then, revered Nāgasena, there is no Buddha; the Buddha is not manifested here."

"But, sire, did those former noble warriors exist who were the forerunners of your noble warrior dynasty?"

"Yes, revered sir; what doubt is there?"

"Have you, sire, ever seen the former noble warriors?"

"No, revered sir."

"But have those who have instructed you, sire—priests, generals, judges, chief councillors—have these ever seen the former noble warriors?"

"No, revered sir."

"But if you, sire, have not seen the former noble warriors and if your instructors have not seen the former noble warriors, where are the former noble warriors?"

"Revered Nāgasena, articles of use enjoyed by the former noble warriors are to be seen, that is to say, the white sunshade, the turban, the shoes, the yak-tail fan, the treasure of the sword of state, and the couches of great price. By these we can know and can believe that the former noble warriors existed."

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"Even so, sire, we may also know and believe in this Blessed One. There is this reason according to which we may know and believe that there was this Blessed One. What is the reason? There are, sire, articles of use enjoyed by that Blessed One who knows and sees, the Arahat, the Perfectly Enlightened One, that is to say, the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five spiritual faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, the Noble Eightfold Path.[143] By these the world with the devas knows and believes that there was this Blessed One. For this reason, sire, for this cause, because of this method, because of this inference it should be known that there was this Blessed One."

"Revered Nāgasena, make a simile."

"As, sire, a city-architect, when he wants to build a city, first looks about for a district that is level, not elevated, not low-lying, free from gravel and stone, secure, irreproachable and delightful, and then when he has made level there what was not level and has had it cleared of stumps of trees and thorns, he might build a city there. It would be fine and regular, well planned, the moats and encircling walls dug deep, the city gates, the watch-towers and the ramparts strong, the cross-roads, squares, junctions and the places where three or four roads meet numerous, the main-roads clean, level and even, the bazaar shops well laid out, the city full of parks, pleasances, lakes, lotus pools and wells, adorned with a wide variety of shrines to devas, the whole free from defects. When that city was fully developed, he might go away to another district. Then after a time that city might become rich and prosperous, well stocked with food, secure, successful, happy, without adversity, without accident, crowded with all kinds of people. When these people had seen the city, new, well laid out, without a defect, irreproachable, delightful, they would know by inference: 'Clever indeed is that city-architect who was the builder of the city.'

"Even so, sire, that Blessed One is without an equal, equal to the unequalled, equal to the matchless ones, unique, incomparable, boundless, immeasurable, of unmeasured special qualities, attained to perfection in special qualities, of infinite steadfastness, infinite incandescence, infinite energy, infinite power, gone to perfection in the powers of a Buddha; having

143. These are the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment.

overthrown Māra and his army, burst asunder the net of false views, made ignorance to be cast out and knowledge arise, borne aloft the torch of Dhamma; and having attained omniscience, unvanquished and victorious in the battle, he built the City of Dhamma.

"In the Blessed One's City of Dhamma the encircling walls are morality, the moats are conscience, the ramparts over the city gates are knowledge, the watch-towers are energy, the pillars are faith, the door-keepers are mindfulness, the cross roads are the Suttantas, the places where three or four roads meet is the Abhidhamma, the law-court is the Vinaya, the streetway is the foundations of mindfulness. And in that streetway of the foundations of mindfulness such shops as these are offering goods for sale, that is to say, a flower shop, a perfume shop, a fruit shop, an antidote shop, a medicine shop, a nectar shop, a jewel shop and a general shop."

"Revered Nāgasena, what is the flower shop of the Buddha, the Blessed One?"

"There are, sire, certain kinds of objective supports for meditation that have been pointed out by that Blessed One who knows and sees, the Arahat, the Perfectly Enlightened One, that is to say, the perception of impermanence, the perception of non-self, the perception of the foul, the perception of peril, the perception of abandonment, the perception of dispassion, the perception of cessation, the perception of not delighting in anything in the world, the perception of the impermanence of all formations, mindfulness of breathing; the perception of a swollen corpse, the perception of a discoloured corpse, the perception of a decomposing corpse, the perception of a fissured corpse, the perception of a corpse gnawed by animals, the perception of a corpse with bones scattered, the perception of a corpse hacked up and scattered, the perception of a corpse still bleeding, the perception of a worm-infested corpse, the perception of a skeleton; the perception of loving kindness, the perception of compassion, the perception of sympathetic joy, the perception of equanimity; mindfulness of death; mindfulness occupied with the body.[144]

"Whoever is anxious to get free from old age and death chooses one of these objective supports for meditation and, with this objective support for meditation, he is freed from lust, freed from hatred, freed from delusion, freed from pride, freed from false views; he crosses over saṃsāra, stems the stream of

craving, cleanses away the threefold stain; and when he has slain all the defilements and has entered the City of Nibbāna that is stainless, dustless, pure, fair, birthless, ageless, deathless, blissful, cooled, and without fear, he sets free his mind in arahatship. This, sire, is called the Blessed One's flower shop."

"Revered Nāgasena, what is the perfume shop of the Buddha, the Blessed One?"

"There are, sire, certain kinds of morality that have been pointed out by that Blessed One. Anointed with the perfume of this morality, the Blessed One's sons make fragrant and pervade the world with the devas with the perfume of morality, and they breathe it forth and fill the quarters and the intermediate points and the following winds and the head-winds with it, and when they have suffused the world, they stand firm. And what, sire, are these various kinds of morality? The morality of going for refuge, the five precepts, the eight precepts and the ten precepts, the morality of restraint by the Pātimokkha as included in the five recitations.[145] This, sire, is called the Blessed One's perfume shop."

"Revered Nāgasena, what is the fruit shop of the Buddha, the Blessed One?"

"Fruits, sire, have been pointed out by the Blessed One, that is to say, the fruit of stream-entry, the fruit of once-return, the fruit of non-return, the fruit of arahatship, the attainment of the fruit of emptiness, the attainment of the fruit of the signless, the attainment of the fruit of the undirected.[146] Whatever fruit anyone wishes for, he, giving the price of the transaction, buys the fruit he prefers."

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144. It is interesting to note that no attempt is made here to drag in the systematized Theravāda schematism of the forty meditation subjects (used in the *Visuddhimagga* and the Commentaries). The first ten (with perception of suffering added in the Burmese edition) are from the Girimānanda Sutta (A V 108ff.). The ten perceptions of corpses correspond to Vism., Chapter VI; five or six of this set are mentioned in the Nikāyas (see A I 42, A II 17, S V 131), while all ten appear at Dhs §§263–64 and Paṭis I 49. The four "sublime emotions" (*brahmavihāra*) of loving kindness, etc., are common in the Nikāyas, though not as "perceptions." Mindfulness of death and mindfulness occupied with the body are both found often mentioned in the Nikāyas. The kasiṇas and the six recollections, included in the Vism system, are conspicuously absent here, though they are both mentioned in the Nikāyas.

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"Revered Nāgasena, what is the antidote shop of the Buddha, the Blessed One?"

"Antidotes, sire, have been pointed out by the Blessed One. By means of these antidotes the Blessed One sets free the world with the devas from the poison of the defilements. And what are these antidotes? These Four Noble Truths have been pointed out by the Blessed One, sire, that is to say, the noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the arising of suffering, the noble truth of the cessation of suffering, the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering. Those who therein are longing for profound knowledge and hear the Dhamma of the Four Truths, they are set free from birth, ageing and death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. This, sire, is called the Blessed One's antidote shop."

"Revered Nāgasena, what is the medicine shop of the Buddha, the Blessed One?"

"Medicines, sire, have been pointed out by the Blessed One. By means of these medicines the Blessed One cures devas and humans, that is to say, the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five spiritual faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the Noble Eightfold Path. By means of these medicines the Blessed One purges people of wrong views, of

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145. The five precepts are: abstaining from killing any living being, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from lying, from the use of intoxicants. The eight are obtained from these five, with the third replaced by abstinence from all sexual relations and the following added: abstinence from eating at the wrong time (from midday to dawn); from seeing dancing, singing, music, and shows and from using garlands, unguents and scents; and from sleeping on high or broad beds. The ten precepts are obtained by dividing the seventh precept above into two and adding: abstinence from accepting gold and silver. The "five recitations" are divisions of the Vinaya rules for monks, based on the Pātimokkha, the code of rules.

146. These are elsewhere called the three liberations (*vimokkha*): "When one who has great resolution brings (formations) to mind as impermanent, he acquires the signless liberation. When one who has great tranquillity brings (them) to mind as painful, he acquires the desireless [undirected] liberation. When one who has great wisdom brings (them) to mind as not-self, he acquires the void [emptiness] liberation" (Paṭis II 58; trans. from Ñāṇamoli, Vism XXI,70).

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wrong aspiration, of wrong speech, of wrong action, of wrong mode of livelihood, of wrong endeavour, of wrong mindfulness, and of wrong concentration; he has an emetic given for the vomiting up of lust, hatred, delusion, pride, false view, doubt, agitation, lethargy and drowsiness, shamelessness and lack of fear of wrongdoing; he has an emetic for the vomiting up of all the defilements. This, sire, is called the Blessed One's medicine shop."

"Revered Nāgasena, what is the nectar shop of the Buddha, the Blessed One?"

"Nectar, sire, has been pointed out by the Blessed One. With this nectar the Blessed One sprinkles the world with the devas; when the devas and humans have been sprinkled with this nectar, they are set free from birth, ageing, disease, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. What is this nectar? It is mindfulness occupied with the body. And this too, sire, was said by the Blessed One: 'Monks, they partake of nectar (the deathless)[147] who partake of mindfulness that is occupied with the body.' This, sire, is called the Blessed One's nectar shop."

"Revered Nāgasena, what is the jewel shop of the Buddha, the Blessed One?"

"Jewels have been pointed out by the Blessed One, sire, adorned with which the Blessed One's sons shine forth, they illuminate and irradiate the world, burn and blaze up, and display light above, below, across. What are these jewels? The jewel of morality, the jewel of concentration, the jewel of wisdom, the jewel of emancipation, the jewel of the knowledge and vision of emancipation, the jewel of the analytical knowledges, the jewel of the factors of enlightenment.

"What, sire, is the Blessed One's jewel of morality? It is the morality of restraint by the Pātimokkha, the morality of restraint of the sense faculties, the morality of purity of livelihood, the morality of reflection on the requisites of the monk's life, the minor code of morality, the middle code of morality, the major code of morality, the morality of those who are on the paths, the morality of those who have attained the fruits.[148] The world with the devas, the creatures with the Māras, with the Brahmās, with recluses and brahmins, long for and desire the person who is adorned with the jewel of

147. On the word-play here, see note 141 on page 141. The quotation is from A I 45.

morality. The monk who has bedecked himself with the jewel of morality, sire, shines forth, shines mightily in the quarters, in the intermediate points and above and below and across, surpassing, excelling and overwhelming all the jewels from Avīci Hell below to the acme of becoming above, and in between.[149] Such, sire, are the Blessed One's jewels of morality that are offered for sale in the Blessed One's jewel shop. This, sire, is called the Blessed One's jewel of morality.

"What, sire, is the Blessed One's jewel of concentration? It is concentration with applied thought and sustained thought, concentration without applied thought but with sustained thought, concentration without applied thought and without sustained thought, concentration on emptiness, concentration on the signless, concentration on the undirected. And when a monk is bedecked with the jewel of concentration, sire, then thoughts of sense pleasures, thoughts of malevolence, thoughts of harming which are based on pride, agitation, false views, doubts and the defilements and are varieties of wrong thoughts—all these, on coming in contact with concentration, disperse, dissolve and scatter, they do not remain, they do not adhere. It is, sire, as water on a lotus-leaf disperses, dissolves, scatters, does not remain, does not adhere. What is the cause of that? The complete purity of the lotus. Even so, sire, it is with the monk bedecked with concentration; those evil thoughts disperse, dissolve and scatter, they do not remain, they do not adhere. What is the cause of that? The utter purity of concentration. Such are the jewels of concentration, sire, that are offered for sale in the Blessed One's jewel shop.

"What, sire, is the Blessed One's jewel of wisdom? The wisdom by which a noble disciple comprehends as it really is: 'This is wholesome, this is unwholesome, this is blamable, this is blameless, this is to be followed, this is not to be followed, this is low, this is excellent, this is dark, this is bright, this is dark and bright in an even mixture, this is suffering, this is the

148. The requisites of the monk's life—robes, alms food, lodgings and medicines—are to be used with an understanding of their proper purpose. The minor, middle and major codes of morality are described in the Brahmajāla Sutta (D I 4–11). The four paths and fruits are those of the stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner and arahat.

149. The Avīci Hell is the lowest plane and the acme of becoming is the highest mundane plane.

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arising of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' This, sire, is called the Blessed One's jewel of wisdom.

"What, sire, is the Blessed One's jewel of emancipation? The jewel of emancipation is called arahatship, sire, and the monk who has attained arahatship is called bedecked with the jewel of emancipation. As, sire, a man who is adorned with garlands, perfumes and jewels shines forth, surpassing all other men, even so, sire, he who has attained arahatship, his cankers destroyed, bedecked with the jewel of emancipation, shines forth, surpassing all other monks who are only partly emancipated.[150] What is the cause of this? Of all the bedeckings, sire, this is the highest bedecking, that is to say, the bedecking with emancipation. This, sire, is called the Blessed One's jewel of emancipation.

"What, sire, is the Blessed One's jewel of knowledge and vision of emancipation? This is called the knowledge of reviewing, sire, by which knowledge the noble disciple reviews the paths, the fruits and Nibbāna, and the defilements that have been got rid of and the remaining defilements.[151]

"What, sire, is the Blessed One's jewel of the analytical knowledges? Four, sire, are the analytical knowledges: of meanings, of Dhamma, of language, and of perspicuity in expression and knowledge. Sire, whatever the company a monk approaches who is adorned with these four analytical knowledges, whether it be a company of nobles, a company of brahmins, a company of householders or a company of recluses, he approaches it with confidence, untroubled, without fear, undismayed, without nervousness. As, sire, a warrior, a hero in battle, when he is armed with his five weapons, enters the battle undaunted and thinks: 'If the enemy are far off I shall destroy them with arrows, if they are nearer than that I shall strike them with my sword, if they are nearer than that I shall strike them with my spear, if they come right up I shall hew them in two with my sabre, if they come against my body I shall pierce them through and through with my knife'—even

150. "Partly emancipated" refers to those at the three lower stages of sanctity, who have not yet broken all the fetters.

151. These are the five reviewings undertaken by the stream-enterer, once-returner and non-returner. The arahat has four reviewings because he has no remaining defilements to review. See Vism XXII,19–21.

so, sire, the monk who is embellished with the jewel of the four analytical knowledges approaches a company fearlessly, thinking: 'Whoever shall ask me a question on the analytical knowledge of meaning, to him I shall speak comparing meaning with meaning, reason with reason, cause with cause, method with method. I shall resolve his doubts, dispel his perplexity, I shall delight him with explanations of his question. Whoever shall ask me a question on the analytical knowledge of Dhamma, to him I shall speak comparing doctrine with doctrine, the deathless with the deathless, the unconditioned with the unconditioned, Nibbāna with Nibbāna, emptiness with emptiness, the signless with the signless, the undirected with the undirected, the imperturbable with the imperturbable. I shall resolve his doubts, dispel his perplexity, I shall delight him with explanations of his question. Whoever shall ask me a question on the analytical knowledge of language, to him I shall speak comparing word with word, the next following word with the next following word, syllable with syllable, liaison with liaison, consonant with consonant, the next following expression with the next following expression, sound with sound, vowel with vowel, concept with concept, common usage with common usage. I shall resolve his doubts, dispel his perplexity, I shall delight him with explanations of his question. Whoever shall ask me a question on the analytical knowledge of perspicuity, to him I shall speak comparing perspicuity with perspicuity, simile with simile, characteristic mark with characteristic mark, essence with essence. I shall resolve his doubts, dispel his perplexity, I shall delight him with explanations of his question. This, sire, is called the Blessed One's jewel of analytical knowledge.

"What, sire, is the Blessed One's jewel of the factors of enlightenment? These are the seven factors, sire: mindfulness, investigation of states, energy, rapture, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. When a monk is adorned with these seven factors, sire, vanquishing all darkness, he illumines and irradiates the world and generates light. This, sire, is called the Blessed One's jewel of the factors of enlightenment."

"Revered Nāgasena, what is the Blessed One's general shop?"

"The Blessed One's general shop, sire, is the nine-limbed Word of the Buddha,[152] the shrines of his bodily relics and the things he used, and it is the jewel of the Order. And in the

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Blessed One's general shop, sire, the bliss of high birth is put on sale, the bliss of wealth, of long life, of good health, of beauty, of wisdom, human bliss, deva-like bliss is put on sale, the bliss of Nibbāna is put on sale. Whichever bliss they want, then, having given the price of the transaction, they buy the bliss desired. Some buy through undertaking morality, some buy through observing the formal acts of the Observance,[153] and, in respect of this and that, they acquire the blisses from the smallest price of the transaction onwards.

"Such people as these, sire, dwell in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma: those versed in the discourses, those versed in the discipline, those versed in the Abhidhamma, speakers on Dhamma, Jātaka-repeaters, Dīgha-repeaters, Majjhima-repeaters, Saṃyutta-repeaters, Anguttara-repeaters, Khuddaka-repeaters;[154] those possessed of morality, those possessed of concentration, those possessed of wisdom; those who delight in the factors of enlightenment, those with insight, those intent on their own goal; forest-dwellers, those living at the roots of trees, in the open air, on a heap of straw, in cemeteries, those who maintain a sitting posture;[155] those who are practising rightly, those enjoying fruition, stream-enterers, once-returners, non-returners, arahats; those with the threefold knowledge, those with the six super-knowledges, those of psychic power, those gone to the perfection of wisdom; those skilled in the foundations of mindfulness, the right efforts, the bases of psychic power, the spiritual faculties, the powers, the factors of enlightenment, the excellent path; meditation, the liberations, form and formlessness, and the attainments that are peaceful and happy. The City of Dhamma is peopled and packed, crowded and teeming with these arahats like a grove of reeds.

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152. On the nine-limbed Word of the Buddha, see note 22 on page 26.
153. The Uposatha, on the full-moon and new-moon days, when lay followers take the eight precepts and monks recite the Pātimokkha.
154. These are the specialists in memorizing and transmitting the five collections of the Sutta Piṭaka. Such were essential during the period before the scriptures were set in writing, when they had to be maintained by oral transmission.
155. These are ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*), to be dealt with further in the next chapter.

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"Those monks, sire, who are experts in the unlimited noble knowledge, who are without attachment, whose special qualities are unequalled, whose fame, strength and incandescence are beyond measure, who are turners of the Wheel of Dhamma, gone to the perfection of wisdom—monks such as these, sire, are called Generals of Dhamma in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks, sire, who are of psychic power, masters of the analytical knowledges, attained to confidence, movers through the sky, difficult to equal, difficult to overcome, movers without a support, able to shake the earth with its seas and mountains, able to touch the moon and sun, skilled in assuming different forms and making volitional determinations and resolves—monks such as these, sire, are called royal priests in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks who conform to the ascetic practices, who are of few wants, contented, detesters of not seeking alms according to the disciplinary code, who go on uninterrupted rounds for alms food like bees that, having drunk in successive scents, enter secluded groves, who are reckless of body and life, having attained to arahatship, are proclaimed eminent in a special quality of ascetic practice—monks such as these, sire, are called judges in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks, sire, who are completely purified, stainless, without defilements and, won to perfection in deva-vision, are skilled in the knowledge of the deceasing here and arising elsewhere of beings—monks such as these, sire, are called lighters of the city in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks, sire, who have heard much, to whom the tradition has been handed down, experts in Dhamma, experts in the Vinaya, experts in the Summaries,[156] skilled in the exact determination of the syllables into those which have mutes and sonants, longs and shorts, and as to their heaviness or lightness, skilled in the nine limbs of the Teaching—monks such as these, sire, are called guardians of the Dhamma in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks, sire, who are knowledgeable in the Vinaya, learned in the Vinaya, skilled in the provenances of the

156. The Summaries (*mātikā*) are tabular enumerations of doctrinal terms, sometimes taken to be the outlines of the Vinaya rules and the Abhidhamma categories.

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rules and readings, skilled in what are offences, what are not offences, in what can be corrected, what cannot be corrected, in the removal of offences, the confession of offences, repudiation of offences, making amends for offences, in restoration to the Order, in being sent away from the Order, in acts of protection, who have won perfection in the Vinaya—monks such as these, sire, are called able money-lenders[157] in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks, sire, who have bound on the garland of flowers of the noble emancipation, have attained to the noble, distinguished, very valuable and best state, who are desired and longed for by the manyfolk—monks such as these, sire, are called flower-sellers in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks, sire, who have penetrated to the understanding of the Four Noble Truths, seen the truths, understood the Teaching, who have crossed over perplexity in regard to the four fruits of recluseship and, having obtained the bliss of the fruits, share these fruits with others who are practising rightly—monks such as these, sire, are called fruit-sellers in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks, sire, who are anointed with the sweet scent of the noble morality, bearers of many and varied special qualities, dispellers of the evil smell of the stains of the defilements—monks such as these, sire, are called perfume-sellers in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks, sire, who delight in Dhamma, to whom the utterance of it is dear, who rejoice exceedingly in the Abhidhamma and Vinaya, who are forest-gone and gone to the roots of trees and empty places, who drink the juice of the noble Dhamma and plunge into it in body, speech, and thought, who, most powerful in perspicuity, are practising the quest of Dhamma in various doctrines, and whenever there is talk on wanting little, on contentment, aloofness, ungregariousness, stirring up energy, morality, concentration, wisdom, emancipation, and the knowledge and vision of emancipation, these monks, going there from wherever they may be, drink in the juice of that talk—monks such as these, sire, are called addicted drunkards in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

157. Money-lenders: so called because the monks described here display a "bargaining" aspect of "change" given in respect of offences committed and removed by confessions, making amends, and so forth.

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"And those monks, sire, who always pass the days and nights intent on the practice of watchfulness whether they be lying down, standing, or pacing up and down, who are intent on the practice of mental development, who are pursuing their own goal by warding off the defilements—monks such as these, sire, are called city watchmen in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks, sire, who teach and recite, speak and repeat the nine-limbed Word of the Buddha in its literal senses and developed meanings, with its methods, reasons, causes and examples—monks such as these, sire, are called sellers of Dhamma in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks, sire, who are wealthy and rich in the wealth and jewels of Dhamma, in the wealth of tradition, the scriptures and what they have heard, who have comprehension of the expressions, vowels and consonants and the characteristics of the speech of the Buddha, who are full of intelligence—monks such as these, sire, are called merchants of Dhamma in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"And those monks, sire, who have penetration of the glorious Teaching, attended by the classifications and exegeses of objective supports for meditation, who have won perfection in the special qualities of the training—monks such as these, sire, are called famous Dhamma-men in the Blessed One's City of Dhamma.

"Thus well planned, sire, is the Blessed One's City of Dhamma, it is well constructed thus, well appointed thus, well filled thus, well guarded thus, well watched thus, and thus difficult for adversaries and enemies to subdue. According to this reason, sire, you may know that there was this Blessed One.

"With a hundred reasons such as these, sire, with a thousand reasons, with a hundred causes, a thousand causes, with a hundred methods, a thousand methods, with a hundred similes, a thousand similes, it is possible to point to the power of the Buddha. As, sire, a clever garland-maker, from a heap of different flowers and by following the instruction of his teachers and as a man acting on his own initiative, may make a heap of variegated clusters of flowers and garlands—even so, sire, that Blessed One, like the heap of variegated flowers, is of infinite special qualities, immeasurable special qualities, and I, at this time, am like a garland-maker in the Conqueror's Dispensation, a stringer of flowers, who by following the way of the

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teachers of old and by my own power of discernment and with an incalculable number of reasons, could show forth by inference the power of the Buddha. But, as to this, you must generate the desire to hear."

"It is difficult for others, revered Nāgasena, to point to the power of the Buddha by inference through reasons such as these. I am satisfied, revered Nāgasena, by your extremely variegated exposition of the question."

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PART VI

The Special Qualities of Asceticism

The King saw forest-monks, ascetic in quality, who had plunged into the forest. Again, he saw householders stable in the fruit of non-return. As he considered both of these a great perplexity arose: if householders can awaken in Dhamma, then the ascetic practices of the monks must be fruitless. To dispel his doubts he decided to inquire from the Venerable Nāgasena, the best of teachers of the scriptures, subtle in crushing the professions of outside teachers.

Then King Milinda approached the Venerable Nāgasena; having approached and greeted the Venerable Nāgasena, he sat down at a respectable distance and spoke thus to him:

"Revered Nāgasena, is there any householder living in a house, enjoying sense pleasures, dwelling as master in a house crowded with wife and children, accustomed to Benares sandalwood, using garlands, scents and unguents, handling gold and silver, his turban studded with a variety of jewels, pearls and gold, by whom the peaceful uttermost goal of Nibbāna has been realized?"[158]

"Not merely one hundred, sire, nor two hundred, nor three, four nor five hundred, nor a thousand nor a hundred thousand nor a hundred myriads nor a thousand myriads nor a hundred thousand myriads. Let be, sire, the understanding of the Truths by ten, twenty, a hundred, a thousand householders. In what manner shall I give you an explanation?"

"Do you yourself tell it."

"In the city of Sāvatthī, sire, at least five myriads of the Blessed One's ariyan disciples were men and women lay devotees. Of these three hundred and fifty-seven thousand were established in the fruit of non-return. And in many other places there were many householders who realized the peaceful and uttermost goal of Nibbāna.[159]

158. See Dilemma 23.

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"If, revered Nāgasena, householders living in a house, enjoying sense pleasures, realize the peaceful and uttermost goal of Nibbāna, then what purpose do these ascetic practices serve? Because of this reason ascetic practices are useless. If, revered Nāgasena, illnesses abated without spells and medicinal herbs, what is the reason for weakening the body with emetics and purgatives? Even so, revered Nāgasena, if householders living in a house, enjoying sense pleasures, realize the peaceful and uttermost goal of Nibbāna, what is the good of undertaking the noble qualities of asceticism?"

"There are, sire, twenty-eight special qualities in the ascetic practices, special qualities that are really so. Because of these special qualities, the ascetic practices have been longed for and desired of all the Buddhas. What are the twenty-eight? As to this, sire, an ascetic practice is a pure means of livelihood, its fruit is happy, it is blameless, it does not bring suffering to others, it has no fear, it is trouble-free, it is exclusively for growth, it is not for declining, it is not a deception, it is a protection, it is a giver of what is longed for, it is a taming for all beings, it is of benefit to restraint, it is seemly, independent, liberated, it is for the destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion, for the getting rid of pride, the cutting off of wrong thought, the crossing over of doubts, the suppression of idleness, the getting rid of discontent, it engenders patience, it is beyond compare, immeasurable, leading to the destruction of all suffering. These, sire, are the twenty-eight special qualities in the ascetic practices, special qualities that are really so. Because of these special qualities the ascetic practices have been longed for and desired of all the Buddhas.

"Those, sire, who rightly pursue the special qualities of asceticism become endowed with eighteen special qualities. With what eighteen? Their behaviour is thoroughly purified, the course well fulfilled, body and speech well guarded, conduct of the mind well purified, energy well exerted, fear allayed, false view of self gone to destruction, annoyance has ceased, loving kindness is established, nutriment is fully comprehended,[160] there is esteem by all beings, there is moderation in eating, intentness on watchfulness, there is the homeless

159. The realization referred to here is that of the stream-enterer, once-returner and non-returner. The fate of a lay person who realizes arahatship is discussed in Dilemma 26.

state; there is abiding in comfort;[161] there is abhorrence of evil, delight in aloofness and constant diligence. Those, sire, who rightly pursue the special qualities of asceticism become endowed with these eighteen special qualities.

"These ten kinds of persons, sire, are fit for the special qualities of asceticism. What ten? The one who has faith, the one who is conscientious, the one who is steadfast, the one who is trustworthy, the one who is pursuing the goal, the one who is not greedy, the one who is desirous for the training, the one who is firm in resolution, the one who is not full of censoriousness, the one who is an abider in loving kindness. These ten kinds of persons, sire, are fit for the special qualities of asceticism.

"Those householders, sire, living in a house, enjoying sense pleasures, who realize the peaceful and uttermost goal of Nibbāna, have all in former births finished the practices and had finished the works by stages in the thirteen ascetic practices.[162] Their conduct and progress having been cleansed therein, they now, in these times, though being only householders, realize the peaceful and uttermost goal of Nibbāna. But without a former pursuit of the special qualities of asceticism, sire, there is no realization of arahatship in merely one birth, but only by supreme energy and supreme practice under a teacher, a good friend, is there a realization of arahatship.

"The special qualities of asceticism, sire, are, for those who desire purification, like the earth in the sense of being the base; like water in the sense of washing away the stains of all defilements; like heat in the sense of burning up the lust of all the defilements; like the wind in the sense of blowing away the stains and dust of all the defilements; like an antidote in the sense of allaying the diseases of all the defilements; like ambrosia in the sense of expelling the poison of all the defilements; like a field in the sense of growing the crop of all the special qualities of recluseship; like a wishing-gem in the sense

160. The four kinds of nutriment (*āhāra*) are physical food, which supports the body; contact, which supports the three kinds of feelings; mental volition, which supports the three realms of becoming; and consciousness, which supports mind-and-matter.

161. Abiding in comfort (*phāsuvihāra*): the jhānas, immaterial attainments, and the noble fruits.

162. The thirteen practices are described below, p. 168.

of giving all noble attainments that are longed for and wished for; like a boat in the sense of going to the further shore of the great deeps of saṃsāra; like a refuge for the fearful in the sense of giving solace to those terrified of ageing and death; like a mother in the sense of helping those who are hard pressed by the suffering of the defilements; like a father in the sense of begetting all the special qualities of recluseship and augmenting skill; like a friend in the sense of fidelity in the search for all the special qualities of recluseship; like a lotus in the sense of being uncorrupted by the stains of all the defilements; like the excellent scents in the sense of driving out the evil smells of the defilements; like the noble monarch of the mountains in the sense of being unshaken by the eight worldly conditions;[163] like space in the sense of their might being extended, spread out and wide, of removing everywhere the grip on what is unwholesome; like a river in the sense of carrying away the stains of the defilements; like a good guide in the sense of getting across the desert of births and the forest and jungle of the defilements; like a great caravan leader in the sense of reaching the City of Nibbāna which is noble and distinguished, without fear, secure, and empty of all fear; like a highly polished speckless mirror in the sense of showing the individual essence of the formations; like a shield in the sense of warding off the clubs, arrows and swords of the defilements; like a sunshade in the sense of warding off the rains of the defilements and the scorching heat of the fires of lust, hatred and delusion; like the moon in the sense of being longed for and desired; like the sun in the sense of expelling the dense darkness of delusion; like the ocean in the sense of producing the noble jewels of the manifold kinds of special qualities of recluseship, and in the sense of being unlimited, incalculable and immeasurable.

"Even so, sire, the special qualities of asceticism are of much service to those who desire purification, dispelling all distress and fever, discontent, fear, continued becoming, mental barrenness, stains, grief, anguish, lust, hatred, delusion, pride, false views, and all unwholesome states of mind; bringing honour, welfare, happiness, comfort, rapture and security from the bonds; they are blameless, their ripening is pleasant and happy—the mass of special qualities, the heap of special

163. The eight worldly conditions: gain and loss, fame and disrepute, blame and praise, pleasure and pain.

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qualities are special qualities that are unlimited and immeasurable, noble, distinguished and foremost.

"As, sire, people go to food for sustenance, go to medicine for the sake of welfare, go to a friend for the sake of assistance, go to a boat for the sake of crossing over, go to the scent of garlands for the sake of a lovely scent, go to a refuge for the fearful for the sake of immunity, go to the earth for the sake of a base, go to a teacher for the sake of a craft, go to a king for the sake of honours, go to the wishing-gem for the sake of being granted their desires—even so, sire, noble ones go to the special qualities of asceticism for the sake of being granted all the special qualities of recluseship.

"Or as, sire, water is for growing seeds, fire for burning, nourishment for giving strength, creepers for binding with, a sword for cutting with, drinking water for averting thirst, a treasure-store for giving confidence, a boat for reaching the bank, a medicine for allaying diseases, a vehicle for travelling easily, a refuge for the fearful for removing fear, a king for protection, a shield for warding off sticks, clods of earth, clubs, arrows and swords, a teacher for instruction, a mother for nourishing one, a mirror for looking into, an ornament for beautifying, clothes for covering, a ladder for climbing, mental weighing for working out a problem, a mantra for uttering, a weapon for warding off something threatening, a light for dispelling darkness, a wind for cooling a fever, knowledge of an art for winning one's livelihood, an antidote for preserving one's life, a mine for producing gems, a jewel for adornment, a command for non-transgression, authority for wielding power—even so, sire, the special qualities of asceticism are for growing seeds of recluseship, for burning the stains of the defilements, for giving strength to the psychic powers, for binding on control over mindfulness, for cutting through doubts and perplexities, for averting the thirst of craving, for giving confidence for the understanding of Dhamma, for crossing over the four floods,[164] for allaying the diseases of the defilements, for winning the bliss of Nibbāna, for removing the fear of birth, ageing, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, for preserving the special qualities of recluseship, for warding off discontent and wrong thoughts, for instructing in the whole goal of recluseship, for nourishing all the special

164. For the four floods and the three fires, see notes 118 and note 119 on page 111.

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qualities of recluseship, for looking into calm and insight, the paths, the fruits and Nibbāna, for bringing great beauty to what is praised, extolled and revered by the whole world, for closing all the sorrowful ways, for climbing up to the rocky crests and summits of the goal of recluseship, for casting out crooked, bent, uneven mentality, for proficiently repeating out loud the things that are and are not to be followed, for threatening the enemies which are all the defilements, for dissipating the darkness of ignorance, for allaying the scorching fever of the three fires, for achieving smooth, exquisite and peaceful attainments, for completely preserving the special qualities of the whole of recluseship, for producing the noble jewel of the factors of enlightenment, for adorning meditators, for not transgressing a happiness which is blameless, subtle, exquisite and peaceful, for wielding power in the noble Dhamma over the whole of recluseship. Thus, sire, incomparable are the special qualities of asceticism, immeasurable, unequalled, without a counterpart, without a superior, highest, best, eminent, surpassing, extended, broad, wide, outspread, important, weighty and mighty.

"Sire, whatever man, fit, competent, suitable, worthy, proper, of little desire, pleased, aloof, ungregarious, of stirred up energy, self-resolute, not fraudulent, not deceitful, not living for his belly, not desirous of gains, fame and renown, having faith, gone forth through faith, desirous of being set free from ageing and death, undertakes a special quality of asceticism, thinking: 'I will master the instruction,' he merits a double honour: he is dear and beloved, longed for and desired of devas and humans; he is like flowers of the great-flowered and Arabian jasmines to the man who is bathed and anointed; he is like a sumptuous meal to a famished man; he is like a cool, clear and fragrant drink to a thirsty man; he is like a wonderful medicinal herb to a poisoned man; he is like a fine chariot harnessed with thoroughbreds to a man who wants to travel with speed; he is like the wishing-gem to a man desirous of prosperity; he is like a fair, spotless white parasol to a man desirous of being consecrated king; he is like the supreme attaining of the fruit of arahatship to a man desirous of Dhamma. In him the four foundations of mindfulness reach the consummation of development; the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the five spiritual faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the Noble

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Eightfold Path reach the consummation of development. He arrives at calm and insight; the practice of attaining matures; and the four fruits of recluseship, the four analytical knowledges, the three knowledges, the six super-knowledges and the whole Dhamma for a recluse are all fit to be borne by him—he is consecrated king by means of the fair, stainless, white parasol of emancipation.

"Thirteen are these ascetic practices, sire, purified by which a man, having entered the great sea of Nibbāna, shall bathe therein, shall attain the eight meditative attainments in the fine-material and immaterial spheres,[165] and achieve the forms of psychic power, the element of deva-like hearing, discrimination of the thoughts of others, recollection of his former habitations, deva-like seeing, and the destruction of all the cankers.[166] What are the thirteen? The refuse-rag-wearer's practice; the triple-robe-wearer's practice; the alms food-eater's practice; the house-to-house-walker's practice; the practice of being a one-session eater; the practice of being an eater of what is dropped into the bowl; the later-food-refuser's practice; the forest-dweller's practice; the tree-root-dweller's practice; the open-air-dweller's practice; the charnel-ground-dweller's practice; the any-bed-user's practice; the sitter's practice.[167] It is because, sire, he formerly pursued and performed, made a habit of and carried out, moved and lived by and fulfilled these thirteen ascetic practices that he now gets at the whole of recluseship, and all the peaceful, blissful attainments are fit to be borne by him.

"As, sire, a lotus, rising to birth from its roots in the water and perfectly pure when it is full grown, is glossy, soft, desirable, sweet-smelling, liked, longed for, praised, unsoiled by water or mud, adorned with tiny petals, filaments and pericarps, frequented by many bees, coming to growth in cool waters—even so, sire, the noble disciple who has formerly pursued and performed, made a habit of and carried out, moved and lived by and fulfilled these thirteen ascetic practices, is now endowed with thirty excellent special qualities. With what thirty excellent qualities? He is one whose thoughts of loving

165. The four fine-material jhānas and four immaterial attainments of boundless space, boundless consciousness, nothingness, and neither-perception-nor-non-perception.
166. These are the six super-knowledges (*abhiññā*).
167. Detailed explanations are found in Vism., Chapter II.

kindness are affectionate, soft and gentle; whose defilements are slain, killed and destroyed; whose pride and arrogance are killed and humbled; whose faith is unwavering, strong, confirmed and undoubting; he is a possessor of the attainments that satisfy, please, gladden and are peaceful and blissful; he is filled with the lovely and excellent, unequalled pure scent of morality; he is dear to devas and humans; he is beloved by them; he is desired of excellent noble persons whose cankers are destroyed; he is saluted and honoured by devas and humans; he is approved, commended, praised and extolled by wise, intelligent, clever people; he is undefiled with the world, whether this one or another; he sees danger in little and small faults; wealthy is he in the excellent goal of the paths and the fruits of those who are anxious for abundant and excellent achievement; he is a partaker of promised and abundant and sumptuous requisites of a monk's life; houseless is he; he is an abider in the excellent incandescence of one intent on meditation; the basis of the net of defilements is untangled; the hindrance of bourn is broken, crumbled, shrivelled and cut off; he is of unshakeable character; he is an enjoyer of only blameless things; he is freed from bourns; he has crossed over all doubts; he is one whose mind is intent on freedom; he has seen Dhamma; he has reached an unwavering, strong refuge for the fearful; he has extirpated the latent tendencies; he has won to the destruction of all the cankers; he abounds in the abidings that are the attainments of peace and happiness; he is endowed with all the special qualities of a recluse. He is endowed with these thirty special qualities.

"It is good, revered Nāgasena. Whatever are the nine-limbed Word of the Buddha, and those supramundane non-causative actions,[168] and those widespread achievements in the world, they are all combined in the thirteen special qualities of asceticism."

168. These probably refer to the paths, their fruitions, and Nibbāna.

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PART VII

Questions on Talk of Similes

1. The Squirrel (3)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say one quality of the squirrel must be adopted, which is this one quality that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, a squirrel, if an enemy falls on him, brandishes his tail and makes it big and wards off his enemy by using his tail as a cudgel, even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, if the defilements, the foe, fall on him, should brandish the cudgel of the foundations of mindfulness and make them big and should ward off all the defilements by using the foundations of mindfulness as a cudgel. This, sire, is the one quality of the squirrel that must be adopted."[169]

2. The Tortoise (6)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say five qualities of the tortoise must be adopted, which are these five qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, the tortoise, a water-animal, makes his home in the water, even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training should abide suffusing the entire world with a mind of loving kindness that is far-reaching, wide-spread, immeasurable, without enmity, without malevolence, having compassion for the welfare of all living beings and individuals. This, sire, is the first quality of the tortoise that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, when a tortoise is floating on the water, if upon raising his head he sees someone, he immediately submerges and plunges down to the depths, thinking: 'Do not let

169. Each of the similes (and in some cases each of the points of comparison within a complex simile) concludes with the citation of a canonical verse that confirms the simile. These citations have been deleted here for the sake of concision. Often the verses cited cannot be found in our present Pali Canon. Horner discusses this problem at length in her Introduction, pp. xii-xviii.

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them see me again.' Even so, sire, if the defilements fall on the one who is devoted to mental training, he should submerge himself and plunge down to the depths of the lake of his objective (meditational) support, thinking: 'Do not let them see me again.' This, sire, is the second quality of the tortoise that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, when the tortoise issues forth from the water he suns himself. Even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, withdrawing his mind—whether he be sitting down, standing, lying down or pacing up and down—must sun his mind in right striving. This, sire, is the third quality of the tortoise that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the tortoise, digging the earth, makes his home in solitude; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, giving up gains, honours and fame, having plunged into an empty, solitary glade, a woodland thicket, a mountain-slope, a glen, a hill-cave, where there is little noise, little sound, should take up residence precisely in solitude. This, sire, is the fourth quality of the tortoise that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, when the tortoise is taking a walk, if he sees anything or hears a noise, he at once draws his head and his four limbs into his shell and remains unconcerned and silent while (thus) protecting his body. Even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, not in any circumstances unfastening the door-panel of control over the six doors (of the senses) when visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and mental objects strike upon him, (but) collecting his mind, making a control, must abide mindful and clearly conscious for protecting the Dhamma of recluses. This, sire, is the fifth quality of the tortoise that must be adopted."

3. The Lotus (12)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say three qualities of the lotus must be adopted, which are these three qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, the lotus, though born in the water and growing up in the water, is undefiled by the water,[170] even so, sire, the

170. The image of the lotus undefiled by the water in which it grows, as representing the sage, is commonly found in the Suttas. See e.g. S III 140; A II 39; V 152.

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one who is devoted to mental training in all circumstances should be undefiled by family, group, gains, honours, fame and veneration and the use of the requisites (of a bhikkhu's life). This, sire, is the first quality of the lotus that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the lotus stands rising above the water; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, having overcome and risen above all the world, must stand firm in the supramundane state. This, sire, is the second quality of the lotus that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, moved by even the slightest breeze, the lotus trembles; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training should exercise restraint among even the slightest defilements, he should abide seeing the peril (in them). This, sire, is the third quality of the lotus that must be adopted."

4. The Seed (13)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say two qualities of the seed must be adopted, which are these two qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, a seed, even though small, if sown in a fertile field, and the sky bestows showers (upon it) properly, will yield abundant fruit, even so, sire, since morality, if practised by the one devoted to mental training, will yield the whole fruit of recluseship, thus it must be rightly practised (by him). This, sire, is the first quality of the seed that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, seed that is planted in a well-cleared field germinates very quickly; even so, sire, if the mind is well mastered by the one devoted to mental training, if it is purified thoroughly in an empty place, and cast into the excellent field of the foundations of mindfulness, it grows very quickly. This, sire, is the second quality of the seed that must be adopted."

5. The Earth (21)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say five qualities of the earth must be adopted, which are these five qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, the earth remains the same whether one scatters agreeable or disagreeable things on to it: camphor, aloes, incense, jasmine, saffron and so on; or bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, saliva, mucus, synovial fluid, urine, dung

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and so on; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training should be equipoised in all circumstances of what is agreeable or disagreeable, of gains and lack of gains, of fame and ill-fame, of blame and praise, of pleasure and pain. This, sire, is the first quality of the earth that must be adopted.

"And again sire, the earth, without finery and adornment, is filled with its own scent; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training should be without adornment and filled with the scent of his own morality. This, sire, is the second quality of the earth that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the earth is solid, compact, not hollow, thick, dense and extended; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must develop morality that is solid, faultless, compact, not hollow, thick, dense and extended. This, sire, is the third quality of the earth that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the earth is untiring though it supports villages, market-towns, cities, country districts, trees, mountains, rivers, ponds, lakes, wild animals, birds, men and groups of men and women; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training should be untiring in exhorting and instructing and advising and gladdening and arousing and inciting and delighting (others) and in teaching Dhamma. This, sire, is the fourth quality of the earth that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the earth is free from approval and repugnance; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must abide with a mind that, like the earth, is free from approval and repugnance. This, sire, is the fifth quality of the earth that must be adopted."

6. Water (22)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say five qualities of water must be adopted, which are these five qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, water is well poised, unshaken, untroubled and quite pure by nature, even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, dispelling trickery, cajolery, insinuation and belittling,[171] should be well poised, unshaken, untroubled and

171. *Kuhana-lapana-nemittaka-nippesikatā*. These are wrong means of livelihood for monks. See Vism I 61–64.

quite pure by nature in good habits. This, sire is the first quality of water that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, water is poised cool by nature; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, out of compassion for all beings and seeking their welfare, should be possessed of forbearance, loving kindness and mercy. This, sire, is the second quality of water that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, water makes pure what was impure; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, whether he be in a village or a forest, should in all circumstances be one who, by not (meriting) a legal question, does not give an occasion to a preceptor, a teacher, or to grades of teachers (to make a legal question against him).[172] This, sire, is the third quality of water that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, water is desired by the manyfolk; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, because he is of few wishes, content, aloof, solitary in meditation, must be one who is constantly much desired by the whole world. This, sire, is the fourth quality of water that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, water furnishes woe to no one; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training should not do evil by body, speech or mind for producing in others strife, quarrels, contentions, disputes, neglected meditation and dislike. This, sire, is the fifth quality of water that must be adopted."

7. Fire(23)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say five qualities of fire must be adopted, which are these five qualities which must be adopted?"

"As, sire, fire burns grass, sticks, branches and foliage, even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must burn with the fire of knowledge all those defilements which, whether internal or external, are the experiencing of agreeable and disagreeable objects. This, sire, is the first quality of fire that must be adopted.

172. *Anadhikaraṇa.* The Vinaya texts mention four kinds of legal questions (*adhikaraṇa*) or grounds for litigation in the Order; see Vin II 88; III 164; IV 126, 238. Also M II 247. The four kinds involve disputes, censure, offences, and obligations.

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"And again, sire, fire is merciless and unpitying; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training should not show pity and mercy for any of the defilements. This, sire, is the second quality of fire that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, fire wards off cold; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, generating energy, ardour and incandescence, must ward off the defilements. This, sire, is the third quality of fire that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, fire, free from approval and repugnance, generates warmth; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, free from approval and repugnance, must abide with a mind like fire. This, sire, is the fourth quality of fire that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, fire dispels darkness and makes light appear; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, must make the light of knowledge appear. This, sire, is the fifth quality of fire that must be adopted.

8. The Wind (24)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say five qualities of the wind must be adopted, which are these five qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, the wind blows through a woodland thicket that is in full bloom, even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must delight in the woodland of the objective supports (for meditation) that are in bloom with the lovely flowers of emancipation. This, sire, is the first quality of the wind that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the wind agitates a group of *dharaṇīruha* trees; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, going into a woodland, should agitate the defilements by investigating the formations. This, sire, is the second quality of the wind that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the wind moves about in space; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training should make his mind move about in the supramundane states.[173] This, sire, is the third quality of the wind that must be adopted.

173. The nine supramundane states (*lokuttarā dhammā*) are the four paths, the four fruits and Nibbāna.

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"And again, sire, the wind carries scent; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must carry his own fragrant scent of morality. This, sire, is the fourth quality of the wind that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the wind is without an abode, it does not dwell in a house; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training should in all circumstances be freed, without an abode, houseless and independent. This, sire, is the fifth quality of the wind that must be adopted."

9. The Mountain (25)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say five qualities of the mountain must be adopted, which are these five qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, the mountain is unshaken, untrembling and immovable, even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training in regard to the respect and contempt, the honours and lack of honours, the reverence and lack of reverence, the renown and lack of renown, in regard to the blame and praise (shown him), in regard to pleasure and pain, and among what is agreeable or disagreeable: visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and mental objects—should in no circumstances be stirred to lust by things causing lust, be stirred to hatred by things causing hatred, be deluded by things causing delusion; he should not tremble or shake, he should be unshaken like the mountain. This, sire, is the first quality of the mountain that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, a mountain is firm, not associating with anything; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must be firm and ungregarious, given to association with none. This, sire, is the second quality of the mountain that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, no seed grows on a mountain; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training should not allow the defilements to grow in his own mind. This, sire, is the third quality of the mountain that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, a mountain is very lofty; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must become very lofty in knowledge. This, sire, is the fourth quality of the mountain that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the mountain cannot be elevated or bent down; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training

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should overcome (being) uplifted or downcast. This, sire, is the fifth quality of the mountain that must be adopted."

10. Space (26)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say five qualities of space must be adopted, which are these five qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, space is everywhere impossible to grasp, even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must everywhere be impossible for the defilements to grasp. This, sire, is the first quality of space that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, space is frequented by seers, ascetics, (non-human) beings and flocks of birds; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must make his mind move about among the formations, thinking: 'They are impermanent, suffering, non-self.' This, sire, is the second quality of space that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, space is awe-inspiring; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training should make his mind anxious about rebirth in any of the becomings, and satisfaction (in them) should not be built up. This, sire, is the third quality of space that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, space is infinite, boundless and immeasurable; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must be of infinite morality and unmeasured knowledge. This, sire, is the fourth quality of space that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, space does not hang on to, is not taken hold of by, does not repose on and is unimpeded by (anything); even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must in all circumstances be one who does not hang on to a family, a group, a gain, a residence, an impediment, a requisite (of a monk's life), or any of the defilements; he must be one who is not taken hold of, does not repose on, and is not impeded (by them). This, sire, is the fifth quality of space that must be adopted."

11. The Moon (27)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say five qualities of the moon must be adopted, which are these five qualities that must be adopted?"

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"As, sire, the moon, rising in the bright fortnight, waxes more and more, even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must grow more and more in good conduct, morality, the special qualities, the practice of the duties, in the tradition and spiritual realization, in solitary meditation, in the foundations of mindfulness, in guarding the doors of the sense faculties, in moderation in eating, and in intentness on watchfulness. This, sire, is the first quality of the moon that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the moon is a mighty ruler; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must be a mighty ruler over desire. This, sire, is the second quality of the moon that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the moon moves at night; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must be aloof. This, sire, is the third quality of the moon that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the moon has his mansion as his banner; even so, sire, must the one who is devoted to mental training have morality as his banner. This, sire, is the fourth quality of the moon that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the moon rises as promised and desired; even so, sire, must the one who is devoted to mental training visit families as promised and desired. This, sire, is the fifth quality of the moon that must be adopted."

12. The Sun (28)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say seven qualities of the sun must be adopted, which are these seven qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, the sun causes all water to dry up, even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must cause all the defilements to dry up completely. This, sire, is the first quality of the sun that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the sun dispels the darkness of the night; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must dispel the darkness of lust, the darkness of hatred, the darkness of delusion, the darkness of pride, the darkness of wrong view, the darkness of the defilements and the darkness of all misconduct. This, sire, is the second quality of the sun that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the sun moves constantly; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must pay proper

attention constantly. This, sire, is the third quality of the sun that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the sun has a halo of rays; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must be one who has a halo of objective supports (for meditation). This, sire, is the fourth quality of the sun that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the sun moves about warming a great body of people; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must warm the world with good conduct, morality, the special qualities, the practice of the duties, with meditation, the deliverances, concentration, the attainments, the spiritual faculties, the powers, the factors of enlightenment, the foundations of mindfulness, the right efforts and the bases of psychic power. This, sire, is the fifth quality of the sun that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the sun moves about terrified of Rāhu, the monster of the eclipse; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must be strongly stirred in his mind with a great stirring fear when he sees beings entangled in the net of the defilements, in the Downfall, and in the fruition of the lawless wilderness of bad conduct and bad destinations, who are fastened to a mass of false views, have taken a wrong path and are following the wrong way. This, sire, is the sixth quality of the sun that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the sun makes manifest what is good and what is evil; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must make manifest the spiritual faculties, the powers, the factors of enlightenment, the foundations of mindfulness, the right efforts, the bases of psychic power, and mundane and supramundane states. This, sire, is the seventh quality of the sun that must be adopted."

13. The Tree (55)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say three qualities of the tree must be adopted, which are these three qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, the tree bears flowers and fruits, even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must be one who bears the flowers of emancipation and the fruits of recluseship. This, sire, is the first quality of the tree that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the tree gives shade to people who come up to it and approach it; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to

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mental training must receive courteously the favour of worldly things or the favour of Dhamma from men who come up to him and approach him. This, sire, is the second quality of the tree that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the tree makes no distinction in the shade (it affords); even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must make no distinction among any beings, but must conduct the meditation on loving kindness quite equally for thieves, murderers and enemies and for himself, thinking: 'How may these beings maintain themselves without enmity, without harming, peaceable, secure and happy?' This, sire, is the third quality of the tree that must be adopted."

14. The Rain-Cloud (56)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say five qualities of the rain-cloud must be adopted, which are these five qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, the rain-cloud allays dust and dirt that are arising, even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must allay the dust and dirt of the defilements that are arising. This, sire, is the first quality of the rain-cloud that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the rain-cloud cools the heat of the earth; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must cool the world with the devas by the meditation of loving kindness. This, sire, is the second quality of the rain-cloud that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the rain-cloud makes all seeds grow; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, having in all beings generated faith, should sow the seed of faith for (achieving) the three attainments: the blissful deva and human attainments and the attainment of the bliss of Nibbāna, the ultimate goal.[174] This, sire, is the third quality of the rain-cloud that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, a rain-cloud, arising in due season, preserves the base of the *dharaṇīruha* (tree), the grasses, trees, creepers, bushes, medicinal plants and forest-trees; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, having produced proper attention, must, by means of that proper attention, preserve the Dhamma of recluses, so that all wholesome states are

174. These are the three worthy goals of life recognized in the Buddhist texts.

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rooted in proper attention. This, sire, is the fourth quality of the rain-cloud that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the rain-cloud in raining down fills rivers, reservoirs, lotus-ponds and gullies, crevices, lakes, water-pools and wells with showers of water; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, having rained down the rain-cloud of Dhamma by his mastery of the scriptural tradition, should fill the minds (of others) with the spiritual realizations they are longing for.[175] This, sire, is the fifth quality of the rain-cloud that must be adopted."

15. The Archer (67)

"Revered Nāgasena, when you say four qualities of the archer must be adopted, which are these four qualities that must be adopted?"

"As, sire, the archer, in letting fly his arrows, plants both his feet firmly on the ground, keeps his knees straight, places his quiver against his waist, holds his body rigid, raises up his two hands to the grip, presses his fist on it, leaves no opening between his fingers, holds up his neck, shuts his mouth and eyes, takes a straight aim, and arouses joy (at the thought): 'I will pierce (the target)'; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must plant the feet of energy on the ground of morality, must keep straight his forbearance and gentleness, place his mind under control, bring himself under control and restraint, press against longings and infatuations, leave no opening in his mind in regard to considered attention, hold up energy, shut the six doors, raise up mindfulness, and arouse joy (thinking): 'I will pierce all the defilements with the shaft of knowledge.' This, sire, is the first quality of the archer that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, an archer carries an arrow-straightener for straightening a curved, crooked or bent shaft; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must carry with him, while he is in this body, the straightener of the foundations of mindfulness for straightening a curved, crooked or bent mind. This, sire, is the second quality of the archer that must be adopted.

175. Mastery of the scriptural tradition (*āgamapariyatti*) is the foundation for spiritual realization (*adhigama*), which is to be reached by practice (*paṭipatti*).

"And again, sire, an archer practises at the target; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training, while he is in this body, must practise. And how, sire, must the one who is devoted to mental training, while he is in this body, practise? He must practise (with the thought of) impermanence, he must practise (with the thought of) suffering, he must practise (with the thought of) non-self; of disease, of misery, a tumour, a dart, an evil, an affliction, alien, decay, calamity, accident, fear, danger, transiency, of what is corruptible, instable; of being without help, without stronghold, without refuge, without shelter; of what is void, empty; of peril, of the pithless, the root of evil, of what is murderous, having the cankers, of what is conditioned; of what is liable to birth, liable to ageing, liable to decay, liable to death, liable to grief, liable to sorrow, liable to tribulation, liable to the defilements—even so, sire, while he is in this body must the one who is devoted to mental training practise. This, sire, is the third quality of the archer that must be adopted.

"And again, sire, the archer practises early and late; even so, sire, the one who is devoted to mental training must practise early and late with an objective support (for meditation). This, sire, is the fourth quality of the archer that must be adopted."

* * *

Concluded are the two hundred and sixty-two questions of Milinda that are handed down in this book in six parts adorned with twenty-two divisions.[176] But forty-two have not been handed down. Combining all that have been and that have not been handed down, there are three hundred and four questions. All these are reckoned as Questions of Milinda.

* * *

When the King and the Elder had come to the end of their questions and answers, this great earth, eighty-four hundred thousand yojanas in extent, shook six times as far as its ocean-boundaries, lightnings flashed, the devas poured down a rain of heavenly flowers, the Great Brahmā applauded, and

176. See the Introduction, p. 6.

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in the depths of the ocean there was a mighty roar like the roar of thunder from a storm-cloud. In this way did Milinda the King and his company of ladies,[177] stretching forth their joined palms to their heads in salutation, venerate (the Elder Nāgasena).

Milinda the King was filled with great joy of heart, all pride of heart (in him) was suppressed; he was aware of the pith of the Buddha's Dispensation, confident in the Three Jewels, without confusion, without obduracy; and being greatly pleased with the special qualities of the Elder, and with his deportment well befitting one gone forth (into homelessness), trusting and without desires, conceit and arrogance humbled, he then, like a chief of snakes deprived of his fangs, spoke thus: "It is good, good, revered Nāgasena; questions relating to the Buddha's range have been answered by you; in this Buddha's Dispensation there is not another like you for answering questions except the Elder Sāriputta, the General of the Dhamma. Forgive me any transgression of mine, revered Nāgasena. Accept me as a lay follower, revered Nāgasena, as one going for refuge from this day forth for as long as life lasts."

Then the King and his soldiers paid homage to the Elder Nāgasena; and after he had had a dwelling-place built named Milinda, he handed it over to the Elder, and with a hundred myriads of monks whose cankers were destroyed, he waited on the Elder Nāgasena with the four requisites. Moreover, because he delighted in the Elder's wisdom, he handed over the kingdom to his son, and after going forth from home into homelessness and increasing his insight, he attained arahatship.[178] Because of this it is said:

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177. This is the first time in the text that mention is made of a "company of ladies." The expression *oradhagaṇa* actually signifies a harem. Horner points out that here a reference to the Bactrian Greeks would have been expected instead.
178. Rhys Davids (p. xxiv) writes that the Sinhalese Mss. of the *Milindapañhā* add a marginal note to the effect that the whole of this concluding passage was derived from a Ms. brought from Thailand. Trenckner, the editor of the Roman-script edition, therefore thinks that this passage is a spurious supplement. Rhys Davids, on the other hand, proposes that it is possible the Ms. from Thailand preserved an older and better reading than the Mss. in Sri Lanka. But even though the author actually wrote that King Milinda became a bhikkhu and attained arahatship, this is no evidence that the historical Menander really did so.

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Wisdom is extolled in the world;
preaching is for the endurance of true Dhamma.
Having slain doubt by wisdom,
the wise obtain peace.
In whom wisdom is firmly set,
where mindfulness never fails,
he is foremost in deserving honour,
he is unexcelled.
Therefore let the man who is wise,
beholding his own good,
greatly honour those who have wisdom
as to be honoured is a shrine.

Concluded is the Exposition of the Questions and Explanations of the King and the Elder Nāgasena.

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